

THE FORT
ON THE
SASKATCHEWAN

Peter T. Ream

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Airview Photos. Photo Courtesy C. F. Lowe.

Aerial View of Fort Saskatchewan, 1949

THE FORT
on the
SASKATCHEWAN

A history of Fort Saskatchewan, specially prepared for
the 70th Anniversary of First United Church

by

Peter T. Ream, M.A., B.D.

Preface

This book has been written 50 years too late. Half a century ago Fort Saskatchewan was booming. The future was bright and rosy; men lived for the present and predicted great things for the years that lay ahead. There was no time to ponder the past, and even less inclination, for somehow it seemed to be of relative unimportance. No one set down for posterity the pregnant and poignant experiences of the previous 30 years at a time when men lived who would remember clearly the establishment of the Fort. Then, by the outbreak of war in 1914, the optimism had evaporated, and the people settled down to the quiet, unchanging life of the centre of a farming community. For over 35 years there were no significant developments. For almost four decades there was little change. And why should history be recorded in a tranquil country town in which one year was as the next and each decade like its predecessor? However, half way through the century, there came the miraculous revival of the town. The facilities were modernized; industry located in the immediate vicinity; the population tripled itself within a very few years; a new wave of optimism swept the town. And people began to think of the historic past—only those who would remember had gone. We are passing from the second to the third generation, and the facts of history are progressively more difficult to uncover. Yet Fort Saskatchewan is one of the most historic towns of the Canadian west. Anthony Henday passed this way in 1755; Fort Edmonton was first located close by in 1795; the second Mounted Police fort to be built was erected here (and gave the town its name) in 1875, the first being Fort MacLeod in the south at the close of the previous year; the second School District in Alberta (and the first Roman Catholic one)

was proclaimed on the north bank of the river here in 1885. Historic Fort Saskatchewan—and yet this book is written 50 years too late.

The occasion and purpose of this history is to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of First United Church, Fort Saskatchewan, which is one of the senior Protestant churches of the Province carrying on its tradition unbroken down to the present day. Rev. A. B. Baird opened services in the old fort on January 8th, 1882, and the first Presbyterian Church was built in the fall of 1887. Thus, the emphasis of the book is set on the history of First United Church, and yet the scope is far wider, wider even than the town itself. Every effort has been made to ensure the historical accuracy of the book, but I am well aware of its many deficiencies and gaps; it is written 50 years too late. However, it is offered upon this occasion as a contribution to knowledge of our town, and to stimulate a deeper interest and pride in the Fort on the Saskatchewan.

PETER T. REAM

*First United Church Manse,
Fort Saskatchewan,
Alberta.*

June, 1957.

CONTENTS

	<i>page</i>
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Fur Trade	3
Chapter 2: The Coming of the Mounted Police	15
Chapter 3: The First Settlers, and Developments at the Fort	33
Chapter 4: 1880 - 1889: The Presbyterian Church	47
Chapter 5: 1890 - 1899: Consolidation and the First Settled Minister	56
Chapter 6: 1900 - 1909: The Beginnings of Methodism in the Fort and District	75
Chapter 7: 1910 - 1919: The City of Dreams and the Town of Fact	96
Chapter 8: 1920 - 1945: Church Union, Depression, and Integration	120
Chapter 9: 1945 - 1957: The Post-war Boom	128
<i>Appendix: List of Ministers and Students</i>	138
<i>Bibliography</i>	143
<i>Index</i>	145

ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Page</i>
Aerial View of Fort Saskatchewan	Frontispiece
The Cairn Overlooking the Site of the First Forts	
Augustus and Edmonton	13
Members of 'G' Division, 1897	20
Fort Saskatchewan from Across the River,	
October, 1879	31
The Lamoureux Church and Rectory of 1877-78	35
Ground Plan of Old Fort Saskatchewan	
in the Fall of 1883	38
Fort Saskatchewan, probably about 1885	40
Members of 'G' Division. Fort Saskatchewan, 1906	43
Commanding Officer's Residence, May 24th, 1908	44
Members of 'G' Division at Drill.	
Fort Saskatchewan, 1906	45
"In Sight of Fort Saskatchewan," 1898	49
Fort Saskatchewan School, 1905	53
Agnes Sorrel Forbes	58
The Mansion House Hotel, 1908	61
The Mansion House Hotel, 1910 or 1911	61
The First St. George's Anglican Church	64
Gold Panning in the Saskatchewan, Using a	
Hand-made "Grizzly", 1890	69
The Ferry at Fort Saskatchewan, about 1898	71
Government Street (101 St.), 1898	73
The Opening and Dedication of	
Beaver Hills Church, 1900	78
Government Street (101 St.), 1904	80
Partridge Hill United Church, 1943	83
Partridge Hill United Church, 1957	83

ILLUSTRATIONS (Cont.)

	<i>Page</i>
Rev. A. Forbes and Party Leaving for Grande Prairie, February 21st, 1910	87
Rev. A. Forbes in the Door of the Caboose	88
'G' Division Barracks from the North-East (with buildings identified)	90
The Office of 'The Reporter', 1904	93
The C.N.R. Entering the Fort, 1905	94
The Building of the C.N.R. Bridge, Fort Saskatchewan, 1905	95
Ross Street (102 St.), 1908	97
Fort Saskatchewan Sports, May 24th, 1908	99
Fort Saskatchewan Sports—R.N.W.M.P. Parade, May 24th, 1910	99
Part of 'G' Division Barracks, 1902 or 1903	101
The Stores Guttled in the Fire of 1913	104
General View of 'G' Division Barracks, about 1905	106
The Old Guard Room, May 24th, 1908	108
The New Guard Room, May 24th, 1908	108
The Provincial Gaol, Fort Saskatchewan, 1957	110
The Bay Horse Livery Stable, 1906 or thereabouts	113
The Fire Brigade, about 1907	116
The Queens Hotel—"Waiting for Dinner", May 24th, 1908	118
The Presbyterian Church and Manse	122
The Old and New First United Church Manses on Tofield Street (108 St.), 1957	124
Simmons' Opera House and Residence, 1910 or 1911 ...	126
First United Church (The Old Methodist Church)	132
First United Church on Fire, March 5th, 1947	133
First United Church, 1957	136

INTRODUCTION

For 1205 miles the great Saskatchewan River flows, a natural roadway from the Great White Mountains as far as Lake Winnipeg. For centuries the Indian tribes had known and made use of this route. The northern arm of the river was known by them as Kis-ses-kat-chewan (great, swift, angry, flowing waters), and was not only a great highway, but also a tribal frontier, for from time immemorial it had been the dividing line between the Wood and the Plains Indians. The latter kept from crossing the river for they were not at home in the thick bush country. However, it was essential for those using this waterway to secure a suitable place for the construction of their canoes. Near the mouth of the Sturgeon there was an ideal spot, for here there was a grass clearing surrounded on three sides by thickets of birch and spruce. Accordingly, it was named "Birch Hills", a name common to many of their boat-building encampments. Thus, Fort Saskatchewan began its existence many centuries ago under the name of Birch Hills, and its first industry was boat-building.

Chapter 1

THE FUR TRADE

On May 2nd, 1670, King Charles II granted a Charter to Prince Rupert and 17 other noblemen and gentlemen, incorporating them as the "Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay". This Charter gave them a monopoly of trade in all lands watered by streams flowing into Hudson Bay, and the Company was granted power to rule within its territory according to British law. This territory granted by Charles II to his cousin (and hence known as Rupert's Land) was a questionable asset, to say the least, for at this time there was constant Franco-British strife in the New World. Further, by the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye of 1632, the English had resigned to France all interest in 'Nouvelle France'. Under these circumstances the word 'Adventurers' in the Charter certainly did not come amiss. However, the commercial success of the enterprise was from the first immense, even though great losses were inflicted upon the Company by the French. In 1685 the Company had been driven out of most of its possessions, though the situation was temporarily rectified by the treaty of Ryswick in 1697, which decreed in part that all places won since 1678 were to be restored. Conflict continued, however, until by one of the articles of the treaty of Utrecht in 1713 the French ceded to Britain Newfoundland, Acadia, and the Hudson's Bay territory. The danger was by no means over even yet, for France still held the shores of the St. Lawrence and the island of Cape Breton to command its mouth, and it was not until the conquest and the treaty of Paris in 1763 that Canada was finally ceded to Britain, and, indirectly, the Hudson's Bay territory safeguarded.

In the midst of this international conflict the Hudson's Bay Company proceeded slowly with its development of the lucrative fur trade, for in the commercial field at any rate there was none to contest its rights. By 1749 there were some four or five forts on the coast with about 120 regular employees. It was totally unnecessary for the Company to penetrate into the wholly unknown interior, for word spread rapidly inland that these strange white people were willing to trade useful articles for useless furs. Well before this time Indians from as far away as the Athabasca, the Peace and the North Saskatchewan were making annual trips down to Hudson Bay to trade their furs for the white man's goods, and this was ideal, for the Hudson's Bay Company had never planned to establish posts inland.

There was, however, one notable exception in the record of an isolated and incredible journey which took place well over half a century before. The Hudson's Bay Company had commissioned a young lad of 20 years of age to make a journey into the interior, and for two years Henry Kelsey travelled with the Indians on the plains. A letter from George Geyer, Governor at York Factory, dated September 8th, 1690, indicates that the purpose of this journey was "to call, encourage and invite, the remoter Indians to a Trade with us."¹ For all his lack of years Henry Kelsey was no novice at this work of exploration, for the year before (1689) he had explored the country north of the Churchill River along the west coast of Hudson Bay for a distance of over 200 miles. He left York Factory on this new venture on June 12th, 1690, returning on September 9th, 1692, and as a result Kelsey became the first white man to see the Canadian prairies. As far as we know he was also the

¹C. N. Bell, *The Journal of Henry Kelsey*, p. 3.

first white man to see a musk-ox and a grizzly bear ("... a great sort of a bear wch is bigger than any White Bear, and is neither white nor black, but silver haired, like our English rabbit."¹). Henry Kelsey kept a journal for 1691/1692, which has a long introduction in verse telling of the hardships he underwent and from which any attempt to determine his movements in 1690 must be extracted. He writes:

*"Now reader read for I am well assured
Thou doest not know the hardships I endur'd
In this same desert where ever yt I have been
Nor wilt thou me believe without yt thou had seen
The emynent dangers that did often me attend
But still I lived in hopes yet it would amend
And makes me free from hunger and from cold
Likewise many other things wch I cannot here unfold
For many time I have often been opprest
With fear and cares yt I could not take my rest
Because I was alone and no friend could I find
And once yt in my travels I was left behind
Which struck fear and terror into me
But still I was resolved this same country for to see*



*In sixteen hundred and ninety'th year
I set forth as plainly may appear
Through God's Assistance for to understand
the natives language and to seek their land
And for my masters' interest I did soon
Sett from ye house² ye twel/th of June
Then up ye River I with heavy heart
Did take my way and from all English part
To live amongst ye natives of this place
If God permits me for one, two years space."³*

¹C. N. Bell: op. cit., p. 24.

²i.e. York Factory.

³C. N. Bell: op. cit., p. 40.

In 1690 he reached "Deering's Point"¹, about 600 miles south-west of York Factory according to his best judgment, but his whereabouts that winter are uncertain. By spring he was back at "Deering's Point" and writes of setting up a cross with the year carved on it, as proof of being there:

*"At Deering's Point after the frost²
I set up there a certain cross
In token of my being there
Cut out on it ye date of year
And likewise for to verfyie the same
Added to it my master Sir Edward Deering's name."*³

This was the first object made by a white man on the inland plains, the first symbol of the Christian faith there and the forerunner of all Christian work on the prairies. In 1691 he penetrated deep into present-day Saskatchewan, but there is no way of ascertaining his route, for while daily mileages are set down in the diary, no indication of direction is noted. The information is so vague that one is left dealing more in theories than in facts as to the location and areas of the country he explored.⁴ He must have been deeply impressed with the prairie, however, for he gives it its first recorded name and certainly its most poetic one—"The Inland Country of Good Report".⁵ However, this remarkable

¹Possibly near the mouth of the Saskatchewan on or near Cedar Lake. (C. N. Bell: op. cit., p. 34.)

²i.e. after winter?

³C. N. Bell: op. cit., p. 41.

⁴James G. MacGregor, *Blankets and Beads*, p. 65, suggests that in the spring of 1691 he left the Saskatchewan, crossed to the Carrot River and then over to the Red Deer River; then that he ascended it until he reached the country in the triangle between Kamsack, Saskatoon and Melfort.

⁵Quoted in an article by Rev. J. W. Whillans in the *United Church Observer*, April 1st, 1951.

journey of young Henry Kelsey was quite isolated and was never followed up until Anthony Henday's famous journey of 1754-1755. The Hudson's Bay Company's trade with the Indians was lucrative and uncontested, and once the pattern of the annual trips by the Indians to Hudson Bay was established, there was no further need to send men into the interior.

However, such a monopoly of the fur trade could not go unchallenged for long, and soon the nature of the opposition became apparent. The great French explorer, La Verendrye, together with his sons, was the first to penetrate to the Basin of Lake Winnipeg. In 1734 Fort Maurepas was established on the Red River below Winnipeg, and four years later Fort La Reine near Portage La Prairie. In 1750, probably on the orders of Pierre La Verendrye, a post was built near The Pas. About this time Jacques Legardeur de St. Pierre assumed command of the French in the north-west. His second-in-command the Chevalier de Niverville, was the first to occupy Fort Pasquia¹, the post near The Pas. St. Pierre then ordered Niverville to establish a post 300 leagues up the Saskatchewan, and in the spring of 1751 ten Frenchmen left Fort Pasquia in two canoes in order to build it. This new post was to be called La Jonquiere. In 1753 Chevalier de la Corne succeeded St. Pierre and built a new post up the Saskatchewan, later to be known as Fort a la Corne and which was located not far north of modern Kinistino². At these posts the French traded with the Indians on their way downstream, and bought from them the very best of the furs. Some Crees did continue to make the long trip to Hudson Bay, but the first real

¹Many variants of this name occur, viz., Paskoyac, Pasquah, Basquea, etc.

²James G. MacGregor, *Behold The Shining Mountains*, p. 43f, argues tellingly that Fort La Jonquiere was located about 200 yards upstream from Fort a la Corne. La Corne evidently felt that the earlier buildings should be abandoned, and so built his own post 200 yards downstream from the first fort.

competition had begun. It was vital that the Hudson's Bay Company should do something to counter this threat to its trade.

In London great surprise was expressed by the Governor and Committee at the almost total ignorance of their employees concerning even the immediate vicinity of Hudson Bay, and they instructed James Isham, who was in charge of York Factory, to take steps to obtain a better knowledge of the country. As a result Anthony Henday was sent out on his famous expedition in 1754, a journey that was to take him 2500 miles and 51 weeks. Isham was particularly anxious to contact the Indians of the Blackfoot Confederacy. The Blackfeet would not deign to lower themselves by performing the labour of the journey to Hudson Bay, and yet they wanted the white man's axes, knives and pots. The Crees were quite willing to act as middle-men and make the trip, and so they were tolerated by the Blackfeet, being allowed to winter in the Blackfoot country close to the mountains.

Thus, it was with a band of Crees that Anthony Henday set out from York Factory in the summer of 1754 in order to unravel the mystery of the west and to make friendly contact with the Blackfeet. He went primarily as a servant of the Hudson's Bay Company, interested in the fur trade rather than exploration, but as a result became the first white man to enter what is now Alberta. Just over 200 years ago, on the morning of September 11th, 1754, Anthony Henday stepped over Alberta's eastern boundary at a point about 6 miles east and 9 miles north of Chauvin. Ever westward he pressed until he caught his first glimpse of the great snow-capped Rocky Mountains, about 10 miles west of modern Innisfail. The first white man to see the Rockies, and all Henday could see was potential furs, and chafe at the indolence of the Indians. Here was untold wealth

for the taking, and all the Indians were interested in was dancing and drumming! Henday grew more and more frustrated, as the Crees would only kill for enough fur to make clothes for themselves. The main object of his mission was accomplished when he was received at the Blackfoot camp, an experience that impressed him deeply. Commercially the meeting was not a success, but at least friendly contact had been made with these great warriors of the west. That winter Henday spent with the Crees in the forests west of the present Calgary-Edmonton highway, working ever north and east. By spring they had reached the North Saskatchewan River below Edmonton, crossing Old Man Creek between the hamlet of Bremner and the river. They apparently crossed the river to the north side and camped there on the night of March 3rd at a point about 2 miles upstream from the old Fort Saskatchewan bridge. The next two days they travelled 12 miles north-east, which would put them slightly downstream from the mouth of the Sturgeon by March 5th. This was to be the rendezvous for the Indians going down to Hudson Bay. Camp was pitched, and the Crees took advantage of their ancient skills and the ideal location of "Birch Hills" to construct canoes ready for the long trip back to York Factory. There the friendly Assiniboines joined them, and together they waited until the ice went out and all was in readiness for the return journey. One melancholy note was struck at the mouth of the Sturgeon. Henday had realized the necessity of women on the long trips across the prairies, and had taken unto himself an Indian wife. For 9 months she had worked for him, cared for him, counselled him in his relationships with the Indians, and cherished him. Now, at the mouth of the Sturgeon, of necessity he left her. Only young men and the strong made this strenuous canoe trip, as the return journey in particular was most arduous. The

women and children would watch as the canoes vanished downstream, and among them was Henday's young wife. The Crees were almost certain to come back—but this white man? Well, one could not always be sure, despite his assurances. And so, on April 28th, 1755, they embarked and set off, about 15 canoes of Crees and 20 of Assiniboines.

On the way back to York Factory they stopped at the French posts of Fort à la Corne and Fort Pasquia. At the former Henday watched in mental torment as the French plied the Indians with brandy, half adulterated with water, and after they were quite drunk they traded over a thousand of the best furs. At Pasquia the same scenes were re-enacted, and Henday saw more of the prime furs lost for his Company. Finally, on June 20th, 1755, after this epic journey, Henday arrived back at York Factory with his Indian companions and what was left of the furs. His report was immediately despatched to London, where the Company began to make plans to safeguard its fur trade by establishing posts in the interior. However, before they got around to implementing them, 1763 had arrived and the cession of Canada to Britain. The French traders were forced to withdraw from the west, and the Hudson's Bay Company could delay its plans for a few more years, until other traders from Montreal forced its hand.

The monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company was finally broken by the North-Westers, a Company of ambitious young traders who were forceful, energetic, and even ruthless. This formidable rival, the North-West Fur Company, with headquarters in Montreal, was organized in 1783 out of a number of individual traders who had been spreading over the country and even encroaching upon the Hudson's Bay territory. The two Companies eventually amalgamated on March 26th, 1821,

when the new Corporation traded under the old English title and charter of the Hudson's Bay Company. However, for almost 40 years before the amalgamation took place, there was a grim battle for furs. Wherever the Hudson's Bay Company built a post the North-Westerns moved in, and where the North-Westerns established a fort the Hudson's Bay Company was not far behind. Thus it transpired that forts were established further and further inland. On May 11th, 1795, Duncan McGillivray, a young clerk employed by the North-West Fur Company at Fort George (near Elk Point) on the lower North Saskatchewan wrote in his diary: "Mr. Shaw has projected a plan of erecting a house twelve or fourteen days march by water further up the river. Mr. Hughes has received directions to build on a spot called The Forks, being the termination of an extensive plain contained between the two branches of this river. This is described to be a rich and plentiful country abounding with all kinds of animals, especially Beavers and Otters, which are said to be so numerous that the Women and Children kill them with sticks and hatchets."¹ Angus Shaw was stationed at Fort Vermilion, with Hughes as his assistant, at this time when he resolved to steal a march on the rival Hudson's Bay Company by moving on up the river. Accordingly, that summer Angus Shaw built Fort Augustus² for the North-West Fur Company just upstream from the mouth of the Sturgeon, slightly south-west of Anthony Henday's encampment of 40 years before. The Hudson's Bay Company moved quickly upon receipt of this news, for W. Tomison, who was stationed at Buckingham House, across the river from Fort Vermilion, soon learned of Shaw's destination. He followed him up the river as soon as possible, and in October of

¹Quoted in G. H. McDonald, *Fort Augustus - Edmonton*, p. 27.

²Fort Augustus is said to have been named in honour of Augustus Frederick, then Prince of Wales, and later King George IV.

that same year of 1795 Tomison had begun construction of Edmonton House¹ within a stone's throw of Fort Augustus, even though it could not be completed until the following spring. For mutual protection the two forts of these bitter rivals were joined by a high log fence. Certainly when trading time arrived in spring there was no love lost between the rival factors, but when there was danger from Cree or Blackfoot, then they were allies! The forts did not remain on this spot for very many years. Clifford P. Wilson, editor of 'The Beaver', writes in a letter²: "Competition between the two Companies resulted in the country around the mouth of the Sturgeon being depleted of its furs and in the Winter of 1799-1800 plans were made to move the two forts to the site of the present City of Edmonton. This transfer took place some time between September 1801 and September 1806 but we have no means of determining the actual date." The new location was on the flats where the present City of Edmonton's big power plant now stands. For a while the forts further east stood vacant and unmolested, but before long the Indians had ransacked them for anything of value and then burnt them to the ground. All that remains today is a cairn erected by

¹It is believed that Edmonton House was named to honour Sir John Lake, who lived at Edmonton, Middlesex, England, and was a deputy-governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. (James G. MacGregor, *Blankets and Beads*, p. 165.) George Sutherland is reputed to have been the actual builder of Edmonton House, and it has been suggested alternatively that it was named in compliment to George Sutherland's clerk, John Pruden, who was also a native of Edmonton. (*Historic Sites of the Province of Alberta*, p. 15.) G. H. McDonald mentions both traditions (*Fort Augustus - Edmonton*, p. 28).

²Letter to the author dated November 19th, 1956.



Photo by Dr. W. A. Johnstone

The Cairn Overlooking the Site of the First Forts Augustus and Edmonton

the historic sites and monuments board of Canada.¹ The second Forts Augustus and Edmonton were closed in 1810, and that year Alexander Henry (the Younger) built a new post at White Earth Creek, some 80 miles downstream near modern Pakan, while the Hudson's Bay Company erected its third Edmonton House beside it. These forts again were abandoned in 1813, and the fourth and final Edmonton House was built on the hill above the second Edmonton House, between the present Parliament Buildings and the power plant. Fort Augustus was also moved back to the site of the present City of Edmonton, and finally abandoned upon the amalgamation of the Companies in 1821. In London the Governor

¹The plaque on this cairn states erroneously that Fort Augustus was established in 1794, and also incorrectly that the forts were abandoned in 1807. The plaque reads: "FORT AUGUSTUS. FORT EDMONTON. On the river flat below stood Fort Augustus, established by the North West Company in 1794; Fort Edmonton, established by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1795. Rivals in trade, allies in danger, these companies carried the flag and commerce of Britain, by way of the great rivers from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and Hudson Bay, to the Pacific and Arctic Oceans. These forts were abandoned in 1807."

and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company were evidently becoming somewhat confused over the rapidly changing location of 'Edmonton House', and after the third one had been erected they wrote: "Stop moving Fort Edmonton about, or adopt a new name for each location."¹ However, before the letter arrived the site had been changed again and it was too late to alter the name. Thus, they kept the old name and the new location, and after 18 years' nomadism Edmonton became a fixed point on the map.

¹Cited in G. H. McDonald, *Fort Augustus-Edmonton*, p. 31. See also James G. MacGregor, *Blankets and Beads*, p. 166.

Chapter 2

THE COMING OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

*"Then pass the tea and let us drink to the guardians of
our land,
You bet your life it's not their fault that whisky's
contraband."*

OLD MOUNTED POLICE SONG

The year 1838 saw the last renewal of the Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company for a period of 21 years. It will be remembered that the Charter was not solely for trade. It gave the Company complete lordship over the geographical area, as well as entire legislative, judicial and executive power. In 1859 the Charter ran out and was not renewed. The district became open to all, and free trading was taken up to a greater or lesser extent all over the country, though the free-traders of the upper Saskatchewan were still at the mercy of the Hudson's Bay factors who controlled the outlets. In both 1838, and more so in 1859, there was much agitation over what was termed the usurpation of the Company. Indeed, for many years hostility to the Hudson's Bay Company was actively fostered in Canada. Thus, in 1857, with this agitation growing in intensity and the Charter about to run out, the British Parliament established a committee to investigate the administration of the Hudson's Bay Company, and to consider the state of the British possessions in North America under its rule. The interests of Canada were most ably watched over by Chief Justice W. H. Draper. Concerning the findings of this committee G. M. Adam says: "The report itself is a model of statesmanlike excellence. It is one of the most valuable State papers in connection with Canadian affairs it has been our privilege to inspect."¹ The ultimate result of this investigation was the surrender by the Hudson's

¹*The North-West: Its History and Its Troubles*, p. 22.

Bay Company on November 19th, 1869, of all rights of government over the territories, subject to certain conditions. The trading posts (and certain areas about them) were to be retained; one-twentieth of the land within the 'fertile belt'¹ in which land was set out for settlement could be retained; the other territories were transferred to the British Government for one and a half million dollars, and from it to the newly-formed Dominion of Canada for the same sum. It may have been easy to criticize the Hudson's Bay Company in its administration of the territories under its control, but the truth of the matter is that its contribution to Canada was of staggering proportions, and our debt today to the Company is incalculable. Indeed, one writer has said: "The younger generations of Canadians should be given to understand in the strongest possible fashion, that, but for the prudent presence of the Hudson's Bay Company in North West America, there would be no Canada west of the Great Lakes at this day."² Indeed, in 1866 some American financiers had made an offer to purchase all its territorial interests, and the offer was not unfavourably regarded by the Directors. Relations with the United States, who were casting longing eyes north and west, were deteriorating rapidly, and for these reasons Sir John A. MacDonald felt that Confederation and a transcontinental railway were immediate necessities. The acquisition of the Hudson's Bay territories was the next logical step.

As the transfer was being made of these territories to the Dominion of Canada, trouble broke out in the

¹The boundaries of the 'fertile belt' were fixed as follows: "On the south by the United States' boundary; on the west by the Rocky Mountains; on the north by the northern branch of the Saskatchewan; on the east by Lake Winnipeg, the Lake of the Woods, and the waters connecting them." (Cited in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. XI, p. 861.)

²A. O. MacRae: *The History of Alberta*, Vol. I, p. 213.

north-west. In 1869 an Act was passed in Ottawa providing for a provisional form of government in the territory, and in October of the same year the Hon. William Macdougall was appointed Lieutenant-Governor. He hastened to assume the duties of his office, and, together with the local Hudson's Bay governor, to organize the territory and be in his place when, by Queen's Proclamation, it became part of the Dominion of Canada. In November, 1869, he arrived at the frontier of the North-West Territories and was greeted with the following letter:

"A Monsieur W. Macdougall.

Monsieur,—Le Comite national des Metis de la Riviere Rouge intime a Monsieur W. Macdougall l'ordre de ne pas entrer sur le territoire du nord-ouest, sans une permission speciale de ce Comite.

Par ordre du President, John Bruce,

LOUIS RIEL,

Secrtaire.

Date a St. Norbert, Riviere Rouge,
ce 21e jour d'octobre, 1869."¹

This was the courtesy that greeted the duly constituted Lieutenant-Governor, and which touched off the first Riel rebellion. Because of this rebellion the final transfer of the territories was not made until July 15th, 1870.

At this time the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Donald A. Smith (later Lord Strathcona), recom-

¹"To Mr. W. Macdougall.

Sir,—The National Committee of the Metis (Half-breeds) of the Red River order Mr. W. Macdougall not to enter the territory of the north west without the special permission of this Committee.

By order of the President, John Bruce,

LOUIS RIEL,

Secretary.

Dated at St. Norbert, Red River,
October 21st, 1869."

(Quoted in G. M. Adam: *The North-West: Its History and Its Troubles*, p. 197.)

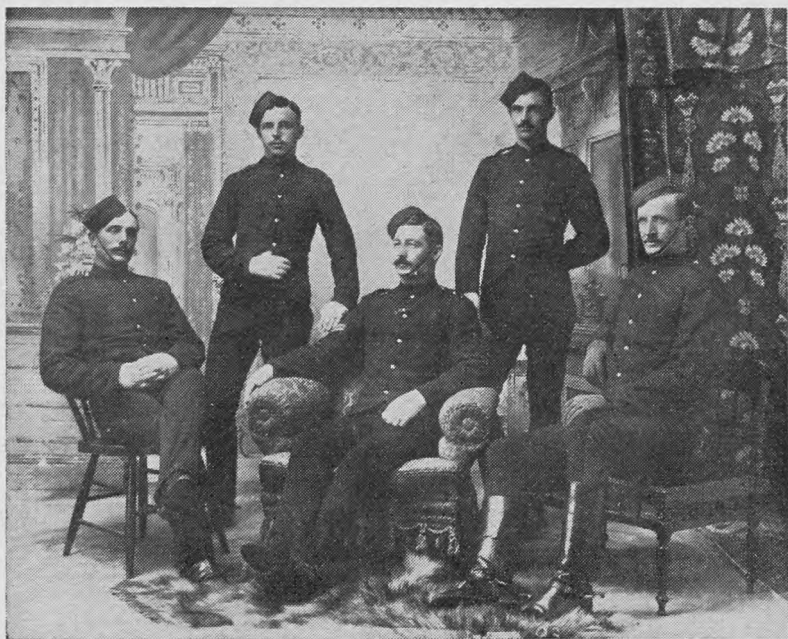
mended to the Government the immediate despatch of a strong military force to the north-west for protection purposes. It was also decided by the Lieutenant-Governor to send Lieutenant W. F. Butler, F.R.G.S., in the fall of 1870 to investigate the whole situation throughout the north-west and make a report with recommendations. He left Fort Garry on October 25th, 1870, returning on February 20th, 1871. His report was complete, instructive, and graphic.¹ "The institutions of Law and Order . . . are wholly unknown in the regions of the Saskatchewan, in so much as the country is without any executive organization, and destitute of any means to enforce the authority of the law. . . . Hitherto it may be said that the Crees have looked upon the white man as their friend, but latterly indications have not been wanting to foreshadow a change in this respect—a change which I have found many causes to account for, and which, if the Saskatchewan remains in its present condition, must, I fear, deepen into more positive enmity. . . . Another increasing source of Indian discontent is to be found in the policy pursued by the American Government in their settlement of the countries lying south of the Saskatchewan. Throughout the territories of Dakotas and Montana a state of hostility has long existed between the Americans and the tribes of Sioux, Blackfeet and Piegan Indians. This state of hostility has latterly degenerated, on the part of the Americans, into a war of extermination; and the policy of 'clearing out' the red man has now become a recognized portion of Indian warfare. . . . I must now allude to the subject of Free Trade. The policy of a free trader in furs is essentially a short-sighted one. He does not care about the future—the continuance and partial well-being of the Indian is of no consequence to him. His object is to obtain possession of all the furs

¹Cited in full in A. O. MacRae: *The History of Alberta*, Vol. I, p. 216ff.

the Indians may have at the moment to barter, and to gain that end he spares no effort. Alcohol, discontinued by the Hudson's Bay Company, in their Saskatchewan district for many years, has been freely used of late by free traders from Red River . . ." Butler goes on to mention the missionary work in the north-west, the Indian mentality, the problem of the half-breed with his distrust towards Canada and hesitation to accept the Dominion Government, the white settlers and prospectors whose possible discovery of gold could lead to serious problems, and the place of the Hudson's Bay Company in the north-west. Summing up this section, he writes: "As matters at present rest, the region of the Saskatchewan is without law, order or security for life or property. Robbery and murder for years have gone unpunished. Indian massacres are unchecked even in the close vicinity of the Hudson's Bay Company's posts, and all civil and legal institutions are entirely unknown." Later he reports: "There is also another point connected with American trade amongst the Blackfeet to which I desire to draw special attention. Indians visiting the Rocky Mountain House during the fall of 1870 have spoken of the existence of a trading house of Americans from Fort Benton, upon the Belly River, sixty miles within the British boundary-line. They have asserted that two American traders, well known on the Missouri, named Culvertson and Healy, have established themselves at this post for the purpose of trading alcohol, whiskey, and arms and ammunition of the most improved description, with the Blackfeet Indians; and that an active trade is being carried on in all these articles, which, it is said, are constantly smuggled across the boundary line by people from Fort Benton." As a result of his observations Butler made three recommendations: (1) The appointment of a civil magistrate or commissioner to reside in the Upper Saskatchewan; (2) The organization of a well-equipped

force of from 100 to 150 men, one-third to be mounted; (3) The establishment of two Government stations, one on the Upper Saskatchewan in the vicinity of Edmonton, and the other at the junction of the north and south branches of the Saskatchewan, below Carlton.

As a result of this report (and other investigations of the situation in the territories), which indicated the urgent necessity both of providing protection before settlers would move in and also of curbing the whisky traders' activities in the south at posts like Kipp and Whoop-Up, it was decided to create a police force for the northwest. A measure constituting such a force was enacted by the Dominion Parliament on May 20th, 1873, the original strength not to exceed 300 men plus a number of officers, and, in addition to clothing, board, arms, horse, etc., each constable was to receive \$1.00 a day, and each sub-constable 75c. It was decided to form no more than



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Members of 'G' Division, 1897

three divisions of 50 men each for the present, and recruiting began in September of the same year, Sergeant-Major A. H. Griesbach being appointed one of the recruiting officers in Ontario. He retired in November, 1903, with the rank of Superintendent, having been in command at Fort Saskatchewan for the previous 20 years. Lieutenant-Colonel George A. French, a British officer, was the first Commander or Commissioner, being appointed by Order-in-Council on October 16th, 1873, and he continued in office until 1876. Captain James F. MacLeod was later appointed Assistant Commissioner. The first detachment of 150 men, divided into 'A', 'B' and 'C' divisions, was despatched in October, 1873, from Toronto by water to the head of Lake Superior and then by the "Dawson Route" to Lower Fort Garry in Manitoba, 20 miles north of the village of Winnipeg, where they were to spend the winter. On November 3rd the enlistment oath was administered by the temporary Commissioner, Lieutenant-Colonel W. Osborne Smith.¹ The first to sign the roll was A. H. Griesbach, followed by Percy R. Neale and Samuel Benfield Steele. Inspector W. D. Jarvis was in command until the arrival of the duly appointed Commissioner on December 17th. From the beginning, French saw the total inadequacy of the force for the task assigned to him; he reported back to the Government and was successful in persuading them to send out a second detachment, which was recruited that winter. Thus, on June 6th, 1874, 'D', 'E' and 'F' divisions, comprising 16 officers, 201 men and 244 horses, left Toronto, travelling via Chicago, St. Paul and Fargo (North Dakota), for Fort Dufferin, a trading post on the Red River occupying the present site of the town of Emerson. There, late on the afternoon of June 19th, they joined 'A', 'B' and 'C' divisions which had left Lower Fort Garry on June 7th

¹"Actually, this was the day the North-West Mounted Police began." (J. P. Turner: *The North-West Mounted Police*, Vol. I, p. 97.)

under MacLeod, reaching Dufferin on June 15th. The total force thus comprised about 350 men, the surplus beyond the 300 envisaged being allowed for possible desertions and discharges. This was a correct foresight, for it was a force of 275 officers and men which started from Fort Dufferin on what was probably the longest march in history on which men carried their own supplies. A further 43 officers and men were left stationed at Lower Fort Garry (6), Fort Ellice (15), and Fort Dufferin (22).

On the night of June 19th a terrific thunderstorm broke over the camp, and the corralled horses, newly arrived from the east, became frenzied into a state of panic. They broke loose, stampeded, and made a dash for freedom. At daybreak the police force found itself 200 horses short. They were headed southward into Dakota. Most of them were rounded up about 30 miles from camp, though some had gone a good 20 miles beyond that. It was not an auspicious beginning. However, perhaps the most serious problem was the morale of the men, until Commissioner French grimly but tactfully advised all who feared the unknown dangers ahead to present themselves for immediate discharge, as he wanted no dissatisfied men in his force. In the meantime preparations for the departure on the projected 800-mile journey west to the Blackfoot country were being completed. The plan was to leave for the west on July 6th, but at the last minute there was a plea for help from the Commandant of the United States military post of Fort Pembina just across the boundary. In short order the entire force fully armed themselves, mounted and rode to the line. There had been a swift raid on a Metis settlement in which several Metis were killed, but the Indians quickly dispersed and there was no incident. The sudden excitement was over, but it delayed their departure for two days.

Finally, on July 8th, 1874, towards evening, "to the accompaniment of bugle calls, cracking of whips and shrill shouts of command"¹ The North-West Mounted Police set out on their epoch-making journey. All were in full-dress uniform—"scarlet tunics and Bedford cord riding breeches, white helmets, white gauntlets, brass buttons and badges, and lance-pennons fluttering proudly in the sun."² First came 'A' division under Inspector W. D. Jarvis, mounted on dark bay horses, followed by 13 wagons laden with supplies. Next came 'B' division under Sub-Inspector E. A. Brisebois, mounted on dark-brown horses, and then, on bright chestnuts, 'C' division under Inspector W. Winder, to which had been assigned the force's two nine-pounder field guns, two mortars, and a supply of ammunition. Behind the guns rode 'D', 'E' and 'F' divisions under Inspectors J. M. Walsh, J. E. Carvell and T. Richer,³ mounted on grey, black and light bay horses respectively. Finally there straggled a procession of ox-carts, ox-wagons, beef cattle, etc. Altogether starting the march there were, in addition to the men and horses, 142 draught oxen, 93 cattle for slaughter, 114 Red River carts with 20 Metis drivers, 73 wagons, the two nine-pounder muzzle-loading field guns and the two brass mortars, and several mowing machines, portable forges and field kitchens. Altogether they had a six-month supply of food and ammunition. The baggage allowance over and above the kit was 50 pounds to each officer and 10 pounds to each man. This was the complement that set out due west on the march to Fort Whoop-Up, at the junction of the St. Mary and Oldman Rivers in southern Alberta, in order to

¹J. P. Turner: *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 127.

²R. C. Fetherstonhaugh: *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police*, p. 15.

³On July 9th Inspector T. Richer (who had received his commission upon the recommendation of men in high standing) was arrested for gross insubordination and conducted back to Dufferin. Sub-Inspector L. N. F. Crozier was then placed in command of 'F' division.

police the North-West Territories—a mere handful of men to patrol 300,000 square miles of virgin territory!

After such a gallant and colourful start the trek west is an epic of endurance and privation. The first evening they made a token march of three miles. The next day two wagon-loads of unnecessary baggage were sent back to Dufferin, where oats were substituted. It was a very hot day and both men and animals were tortured by clouds of mosquitoes. One horse died, and three broken-down wagons had to be left behind. Orders were given to the men to sleep each night fully clothed and with their guns beside them in case of surprise attack. The plan was to follow the route across the prairie taken by the Boundary Commissioners, who were then about half-way to the Rockies. This was a group of men commissioned by the Canadian and American Governments to survey the international border between the Red River and the Rocky Mountains, and to leave some visible line. This was done by erecting cairns or earthen mounds. Square posts four feet high were also used; they were driven six feet into the ground and had a flange on the bottom. The north side of each post was marked "British Possession," and the south side "U.S. Territory." The newly-constituted police force planned to spend each night at a site previously occupied by this Boundary Commission, where they would be sure to find water. However, this trail zigzagged across the prairie of necessity, depending upon where water could be found. One night they would camp in Manitoba, and the next night might find them in North Dakota. This not only hampered their progress, but, worse, took great toll of the strength of their horses upon which their success depended so much. After the first week they pitched their tents on Sundays only, their one day of rest. It was too much to ask tired and weary men to struggle with tent ropes after a long and

gruelling day's march. Lice added another and powerful incentive to sleeping under the stars and as far apart as possible, rather than together and under canvas. Eventually (on July 18th) they reached the Souris River which they had to cross twice. The first crossing was easy enough because of a bridge left by the Boundary Commission which was in good condition, but when they reached the second crossing on July 22nd there was no bridge and they were confronted on the far side with a steep bank. They had to attach drag-ropes to each load and add their strength to that of the animals to tug them up the steep bank. It was a good half-day's work to get safely over to the other side. Before much longer (July 24th), having covered 270 miles, the force arrived at Roche Percee, a trading post just south-east of the present Estevan in Saskatchewan. There Commissioner French and his officers consulted together. The original plan had been to push west and build a fort in the Black-foot country of southern Alberta and then send a contingent north to establish a post in the Edmonton area, but progress had been painfully slow and wearying. After the first 17 miles they had passed no settlement. Prairie cholera of a severe type had attacked both animals and men. The horses and cattle were alarmingly weak, and the men had suffered less only because of the successful treatments of the Medical Officer, Dr. J. G. Kittson. It was also becoming increasingly clear that they would not reach the Rockies before freeze-up, for a three-day blizzard had swept the prairies on September 20th of the previous year. A change of plan was imperative. The only answer to the problem was to relieve the main force of any unnecessary burdens, and so enable them to push ahead more rapidly. As a solution Inspector Jarvis offered to take the cattle and sick horses directly to Fort Edmonton, if he was given sufficient men to make the trip. The danger was great, but there

was nothing else the Commissioner could do but accept the proposal gratefully and assign the men required. Thus, 'A' division, under Inspector Jarvis, Sub-Inspector Gagnon and Sergeant-Major "Sam" Steele, left for Fort Edmonton on August 1st as soon as preparations could be completed. They took with them six men from other divisions and 12 half-breeds, 24 wagons, 55 carts, about 55 sick or tired horses, 62 oxen, 50 cows and calves, as well as the agricultural implements and general stores (including over 25,000 lb. of flour) not essential to the main body.

The main force pressed forward, resuming the march on July 29th, and after many gruelling adventures (including being totally lost on the plains) eventually reached on October 9th the headquarters of the whisky traders, Fort Whoop-Up, about three miles south of the present city of Lethbridge. They saw the "Stars and Stripes" flying over the fort, and considerable resistance was expected. The field-guns and mortars were placed in position and the men received orders to load their arms. Then there was sudden anti-climax. The men were amazed to see MacLeod and Jerry Potts, the guide, ride straight ahead. The Assistant-Commissioner dismounted and strode toward the open main gate. Entering, he went to the nearest building and rapped on the door. After repeated knockings the door opened and an old grey-haired man (who claimed to be a veteran of the American Civil War) welcomed him and invited the police force to enter the fort. The traders knew of their approach and had fled, taking everything with them, and, though the police made a thorough search of the fort and its environs, not a drop of liquor did they find. The man was too old and feeble to endure the rigours of a swift march, and had of necessity to be left behind, together with two or three Indian women. A meal was proffered to the police and accepted; in the large general room a fire

burned cheerily in the open stone fireplace. The welcome was certainly a great contrast to the armed resistance the police had been expecting ever since they began their trek west. Before very long the force pressed on, leaving Fort Whoop-Up behind, until on the morning of October 13th they were ordered to stop and begin the work of building a fort. The announcement was made: "If you want to write home, now is your chance. Your address is c/o N.W.M.P., Camp MacLeod, North-West Territories." They moved into their new quarters before Christmas—not a bit too soon, for the mercury was already dropping to 40 below zero. During this cold spell an amazing thing happened. In an unbelievably short space of time the temperature rose from 40 below to 40 above, the snow started to melt and water was running everywhere. It was their first taste of a real chinook!

In the meantime, 'A' division was making its way with much difficulty to Fort Edmonton, via Forts Ellice and Carlton, and Victoria, where there was a Hudson's Bay Company post and also the Methodist Mission founded by Rev. George McDougall. They had left Roche Percee on August 1st to travel well over 800 miles in poor travelling condition and in face of every obstacle that nature seemingly could provide. Fort Ellice was reached on August 12th, and arrangements were made to leave there the sick men, some of the weaker horses, most of the cows and calves, several wagons and a large quantity of supplies. They left Fort Ellice on August 18th and ran into everything from scorching heat to freezing rain. Much of the trail had to be blazed afresh, and, because of the recent rains, long stretches of the trail were under water, the wagons often sinking to their axles. Fort Carlton was reached on September 11th, and by this time the men were more than fatigued. The horses, too, were failing rapidly. "Upon collapsing they

were raised to their feet by poles passed beneath them.”¹ Many of the men walked all the time as the horses were quite unable to carry them. After what seemed an interminable time they reached Victoria (present Pakan) on October 19th, where the rest of the cattle and 11 of the oxen were left for wintering.² Many of the horses were left dead and dying along the trail. Winter was already setting in and they pressed on with as much speed as possible to their destination. However, progress over this last lap of the journey was even more painfully slow and difficult. The horses were always falling and had to be lifted to their feet. Others could only be kept going by holding them to their task with both hands, one at the head and the other at the shoulders. Turner gives a synopsis of the diaries that were kept of this terrible period:³

“October 24. More road making. Travelled four miles, negotiating several bad hills. Camped west of Vermilion Creek. Two oxen succumbed. Weather turning very cold, with threat of snow. Two wagons and three men were left far behind. The weaker horses were placed in tents.

“October 25. Trail bad. Covered ten miles and camped near Deep Creek.

“October 26. Reached Sturgeon Creek by noon. All horses close to exhaustion. Crossed the creek at ‘The Rapids’. Great difficulty getting the wagons across. One horse, unable to make it, died in the stream. Weather cold The trail grew worse, sloughs across it every few hundred yards; men and

¹J. P. Turner: *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 175.

²At Victoria some Crees came into the post to trade. One bore a name worthy of historical record: “Sky-Blue-Horn-Sitting-Down-Turning-Round-On-A-Chair”! (J. P. Turner: *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 177).

³J. P. Turner: *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 178.

animals struggled knee-deep in black mud. Time and again the wagons had to be unloaded and dragged out by hand. On every side were small ponds covered with thin ice, which proved to be a menace. The horses and oxen, feverish and thirsty, would rush to the ponds, crash through and wait to be hauled out with ropes. Some were so exhausted they had to be held up by the head while the ropes were being attached."

Edmonton was so close at this time that they strove to reach it without having to pitch camp again, but at 5 a.m. they simply had to call a halt, and camped at Rat Creek, about four miles from their goal. After three hours respite, the gruelling task was resumed and on October 27th they struggled into the Fort, though stragglers kept arriving over a period of five days. Sub-Inspector Gagnon made this final entry in his journal, which, freely translated, reads as follows: "Sunday, November 1—At last all our party have arrived in. We left Fort Carlton with ten wagons drawn by oxen; we arrived here with only four. The rest of the oxen died on the way. The distance was nine hundred miles. The time we took was eighty-eight days. Sixty days were marching days; twenty-eight were spent resting, crossing the Saskatchewan, or in work upon the trail. The average distance travelled when we marched was fifteen miles a day . . ." ¹ Truly has it been written: "In the circumstances, Jarvis's report that the fortitude of his men was deserving of high praise seems a masterpiece of understatement." ¹

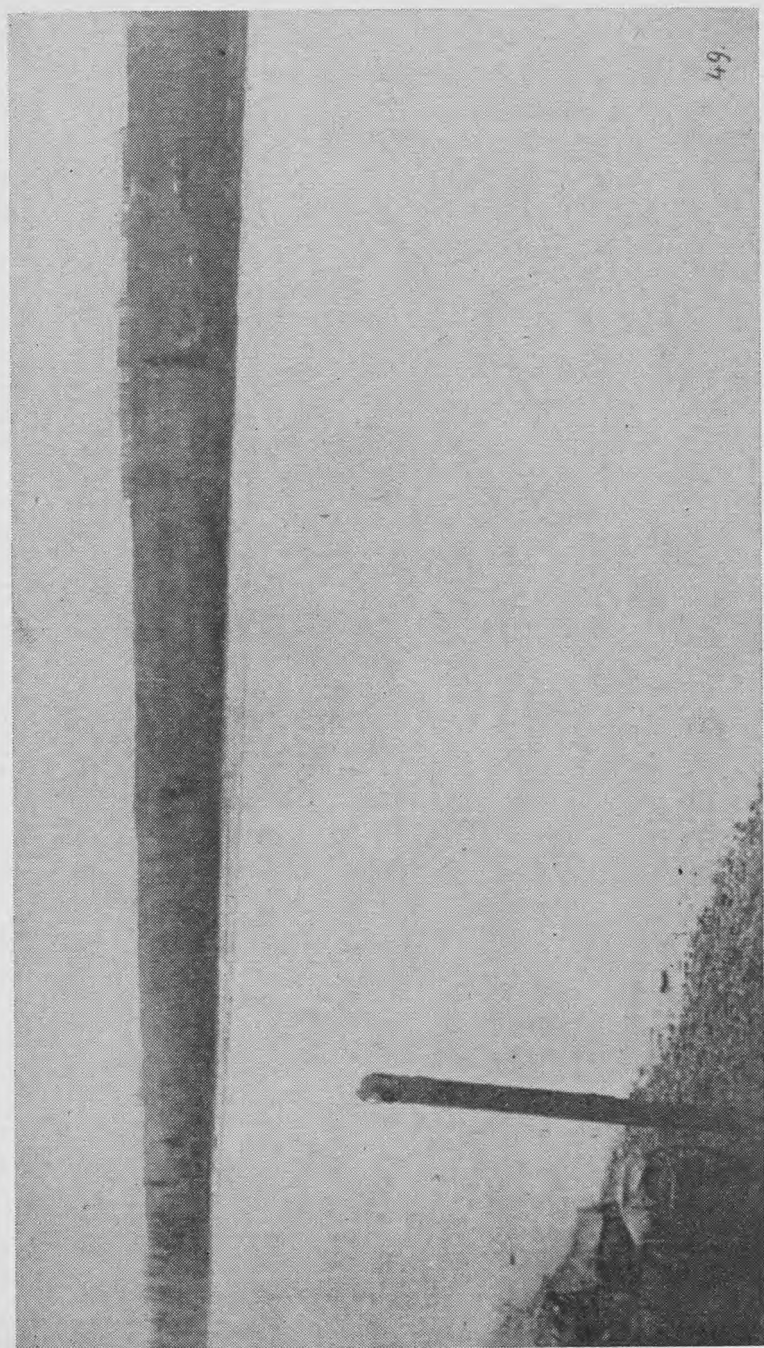
During the winter the detachment was housed in the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort, where Chief Factor Richard Hardisty was in charge, and from which the police made numerous patrols, gaining valuable experience and knowledge of the country. In the spring, Com-

¹Cited in R. C. Fetherstonhaugh: *op. cit.*, p. 17.

missioner French issued orders that the establishment of a barracks should proceed immediately, the site to be on the south side of the river, anywhere between Fort Edmonton and the mouth of the Sturgeon, some 20 to 25 miles downstream. Richard Hardisty had already selected a site for the permanent police fort—the ground upon which the University of Alberta now stands—and urged Jarvis to confirm his selection. However, Jarvis preferred a site nearly 20 miles downstream, probably because it was the general opinion that that was the only logical place where a railway could cross the North Saskatchewan. The banks at Edmonton were high and too far apart, and so it was felt that a town would be more likely to spring up 20 miles downstream than at Fort Edmonton. It was also common gossip in those days that Jarvis and Hardisty had had quite an altercation on the subject, and that Jarvis chose the site downstream to show the Hudson's Bay Company factor 'who was boss.' However this may be, the authorities seemed to be well satisfied with the choice, for in a letter to Ottawa dated March 16th, 1876, MacLeod (then Commissioner) wrote: "From information I picked up and from what I saw myself, I feel satisfied that the site chosen for the Fort is much more likely to be the centre of a settlement than Edmonton. The whole country about the latter (Edmonton) abounding in swamps, while about Fort Saskatchewan I was given to understand that the land was very good for farming purposes. There is no settlement at Edmonton to speak of, only a few scattered houses here and there. The banks of the river, particularly the south bank (at Edmonton) are very high and steep and at the other (Fort Saskatchewan) the banks slope down on both sides."¹

Thus, to the satisfaction of all concerned (except perhaps Hardisty), the site for the new Fort on the

¹Cited in W. A. Griesbach: *Old Fort Saskatchewan*, Scarlet and Gold, 1927 (Ninth Annual), p. 48.



Sanford Fleming
Collection,
Public Archives of Canada

Fort Saskatchewan from Across the River, October, 1879

Saskatchewan was decided upon, and in April, 1875, the police began construction of what was at first commonly called "Sturgeon Creek Post", but early was to be known as "Fort Saskatchewan".¹

¹Turner writes (op. cit., Vol. I, p. 215f): "Plans provided for a stockade of hewn pickets to be fitted closely together, sunk five feet in the ground and rising to a height of ten feet, with a bastion of squared timber 16 feet high in the north-west corner. (This part of the work was of necessity delayed for several years.)

The principal buildings were built of squared pine covered with handmade shingles. There were: a stable with large hayloft, a cook house, a guardroom and several shops, all of which were one storey high, built of logs and roofed with mud. All chimneys were of metal stovepipe. The officers' and men's quarters occupied a space on the west side of the area. The kitchen and icehouse were on the north side; the shops on the east, and the stable on the south. The cattle corral stood outside to the south, near the stable."

Chapter 3

THE FIRST SETTLERS, AND DEVELOPMENTS AT THE FORT

In 1871 British Columbia entered Confederation and became part of Canada. One of the conditions laid down was that a transcontinental railway be commenced within two years and completed in ten.¹ Accordingly, several crews were sent out to survey possible routes across the mountains, one of them passing through the future Fort Saskatchewan district. This crew pressed on into British Columbia, where one of its men at Kamloops met the Lamoureux brothers, Joseph and Francois, and told them of the ideal location for a settlement in the valley of the Saskatchewan. They came immediately, via Jasper on horseback, in October, 1872, and found the locality ideal. Some idea of the intrepidity of these men can only be realized when it is remembered that they were pioneers riding through wild, practically unknown country in their zeal to find a new home. At that time the west was seething with tension, unrest, Indian wars, and the Indians were being mercilessly exploited by free-traders. The north-west was without police protection or oversight of any kind, as the Hudson's Bay Company had surrendered its land and authority to the Government in 1869. Nevertheless, the Lamoureux brothers built a shelter by the Saskatchewan for the winter, and in the spring of 1873 Francois, the bachelor, remained behind while Joseph went back by horse to Winnipeg (Fort Garry) and from there by water to his home in St. George d'Iberville, Quebec, in order to fetch his whole family. The women and children were left at St. Boniface, while the men pressed forward

¹Construction as a public work actually began in 1874, but progress was very slow. In 1880 the project was taken over by the Canadian Pacific Railway with a contract calling for completion by May 1st, 1891. Work pushed ahead rapidly, and it was completed in 1885, well ahead of schedule.

in the fall of 1873 to prepare the settlement and cut logs for the buildings. In the spring of 1874 Joseph again returned east for the family and before winter they were all settled on the north bank of the Saskatchewan in the Lamoureux district, as it has been called ever since, directly across the river from the town of Fort Saskatchewan. In 1874 Henri Lambert arrived, followed a year later by Jean-Baptiste Beaupre and James Reid, and soon other families came in, all settling on the river lots of the north bank. In November, 1875, Father Lestanc, OMI, came from St. Albert to visit the newly-built barracks on the south bank and the few families on the other side of the river. On February 12th, 1876, Father A. Blanchet, OMI, succeeded Lestanc as resident missionary, and under his leadership, on June 18th of the same year, it was decided to build on the north side of the river about two miles downstream from the settlement, opposite the island.¹ Later he returned from St. Albert with George Bourque in order to cut logs for the projected building, which was duly erected that summer. Shortly afterwards, on February 12th, 1877, Joseph Lamoureux bought the claim of Jean d'Artigue for \$100 and gave it to the diocese as a site for the future church. Accordingly, the building opposite the island was dismantled and moved to the new location. On October 1st, 1877, Father Leduc concluded a contract with Joseph Lamoureux for the building of a church and Rectory at a cost of \$842, which was considered a bargain. The following November (1878) \$25 more was subscribed for the plastering of the interior of the church, which received the name of "Notre Dame de Lourdes". The parish was formally established in 1891, Father Ernest Dorais becoming the first parish priest, arriving from Montreal in 1892. The first recorded baptism at Lamoureux was that of Hypolite Lamoureux on September 2nd, 1877, and

¹This was close to the sites of the first Forts Augustus and Edmonton.

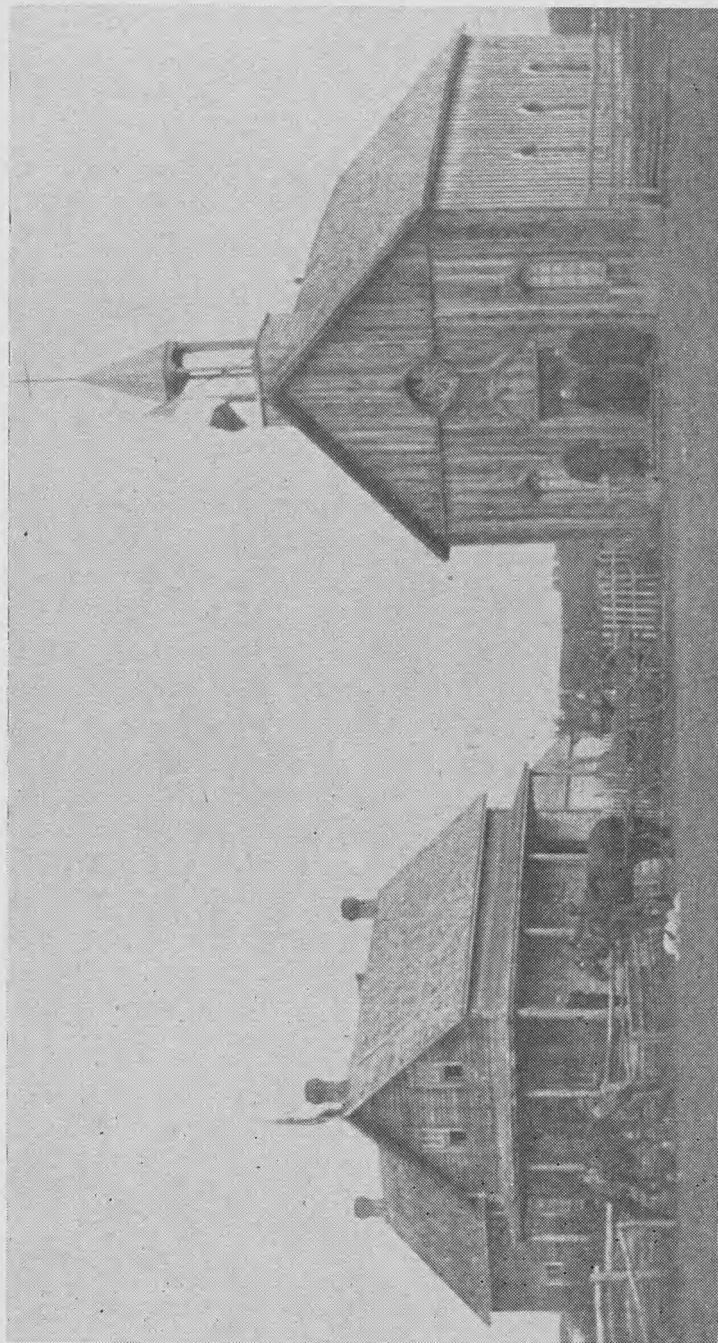


Photo Courtesy Father Berube, Lamoureux

The Lamoureux Church and Rectory of 1877-78

The old log chapel of 1876 can just be seen behind the Rectory.

The photo was probably taken near the turn of the century.

the first wedding was that of John Brazeau and Adeline Ward on September 2nd, 1878. The district continued to grow, and the need for a new church was soon felt. Plans were made, and Archbishop Legal laid the corner-stone of the present church on August 10th, 1902. He returned on February 15th of the following year in order to dedicate the church and open it for worship. An extension was added on to the church in 1928. In 1918 a new brick Rectory was built on the west side of the church, the building at present occupied by the Sisters of Holy Cross, and in 1924 the Parish Hall was erected. The present parish priest is Father R. Berube, who lives in the new Rectory, built in 1953, on the east side of the church.

From the beginning the barracks served also as the gaol, and the priests would visit the prisoners frequently. On Saturday, December 20th, 1879, Bishop Grandin and Father Leduc came to assist an Indian, a Cree by the name of Kak-Say-Kwyo-Chin (or Swift Runner), on the day of his execution. This was the first time since its inception that the North-West Mounted Police had arranged for a hanging at Fort Saskatchewan. He had been sentenced to death for cannibalism, having killed and eaten his family, ending with his mother-in-law. It is reported that he acknowledged his mother-in-law to be a bit tough.¹ "I take it," wrote W. A. Griesbach, "that this was the first appearance of the mother-in-law joke in these parts."² Before the execution he was granted the opportunity of addressing the large crowd that had gathered. "He acknowledged his guilt, thanked those who had had him in charge for their kindness, then scolded his guard for keeping him waiting in the cold."¹ Amongst the interested spectators was Jim Reade, who had taken part in the gold rush to California in 1849 and had travelled widely in the western states in those

¹J. P. Turner: *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 501.

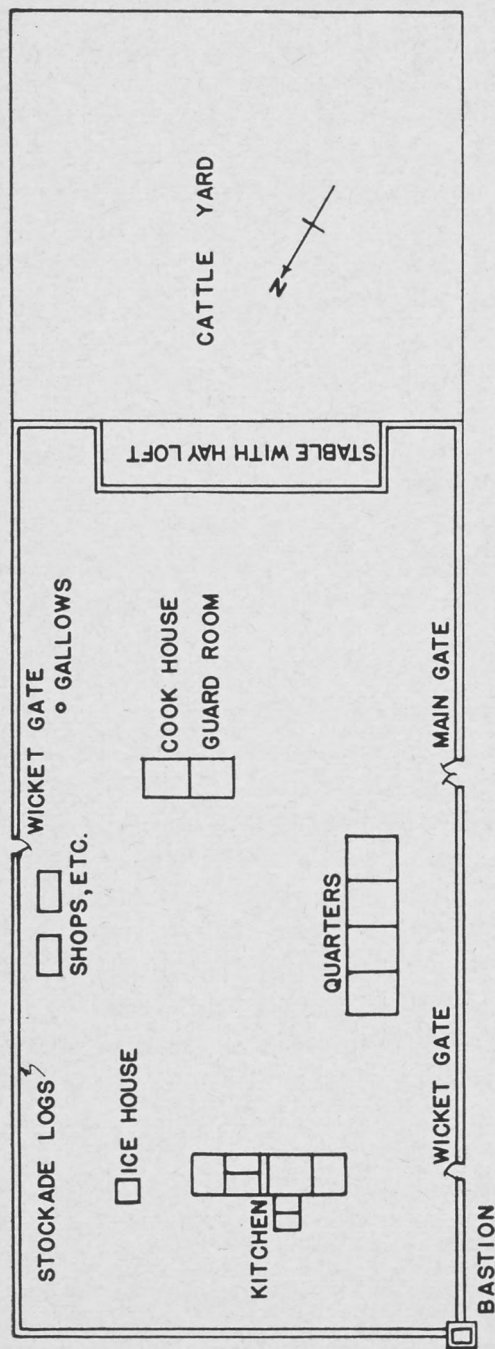
²W. A. Griesbach: *op. cit.*, p. 49.

days. He was very sceptical as to whether the Mounted Police could carry out a hanging in a proper fashion. When it was over he gave it his highest praise: "That's the purtiest hangin' I ever seen and it's the twenty-ninth."¹

By 1879 the guardroom facilities were becoming inadequate, and Jarvis recommended that a combined guardroom and prison be built, as well as more adequate accommodation for men's quarters, recreation room, cook house and storage. That year a stockade 11-feet high was being erected to enclose the buildings. This was calculated to lessen the duties of the post, as fewer men would be required as a guard. Superintendent Jarvis or Sub-Inspector Gagnon was obliged to go out on all patrols with not more than two or three men. Approximately 20 men comprised the garrison throughout this period,² and this was not increased until after the second Riel rebellion of 1885. In 1880 Fort Saskatchewan was placed under Battleford and Superintendent W. M. Herchmer there, and as a result Jarvis left in July to take command of Fort MacLeod. Herchmer also felt that better barrack room and guardroom accommodation was badly needed, and was of the opinion that the detachment should be strengthened as there was considerable law-breaking prevalent in the area. By 1881 it was obvious that there would have to be a redistribution of the police force when the route of the C.P.R. became known, and for the first time it was suggested that Fort Saskatchewan should be closed and divisional quarters provided at Edmonton. Also it was suggested that Edmonton become an outpost from

¹J. P. Turner: *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 501.

²The Edmonton Bulletin for November 11th, 1882, records the names of the men stationed at Fort Saskatchewan at that time: Inspector Gagnon in command; Acting Sergeant-Major Parker; Hospital Steward Geldert; Store man (with duties of Quarter-Master's Sergeant) A. McNicol; Acting Corporal Dandy; Sub-Constables Schultz, Coutts, Bradshaw, Chabot, Mewhort, Maitland, Wright, Hurley, Cullen, Thom, and Moody. It was also reported in the paper that on the morning of the 3rd the terms of Sergeant-Major Belcher, Sergeant Steele and Sub-Constable Chamberlayne had expired.



SCALE  100 FEET

Diagram taken from "Scarlet and Gold," 9th Annual (1927), p. 48, by A. Schoening

Ground Plan of Old Fort Saskatchewan in the Fall of 1883

"The sketch shows a distance of 30 feet between the stockade and the buildings on the west side. My friend Mr. K. A. McLeod, of Edmonton, thinks that this distance was actually more like, say, ten or twelve feet. I agree with him in that view. Mr. McLeod also thinks that the Fort was wider from east to west than is shown in the sketch. I do not concur in that view. I think that the sketch in that particular is correct. The cattle yard was not actually as large as it is shown on the sketch. It was more the square of the stable." (W. A. Griesbach in "Scarlet and Gold," 9th Annual (1927), p. 49).

Calgary.¹ The latter suggestion was implemented in 1883 when Fort Saskatchewan was transferred from Battleford to Calgary, and in the fall of the same year A. H. Griesbach was transferred from Regina to assume the command of Fort Saskatchewan in succession to Gagnon. The condition of the buildings was again giving rise to much concern and the Commissioner recommended the erection of a new barracks at Fort Saskatchewan, as the old one was badly out of repair. Accordingly, the following year (1884), under the direction of Griesbach, the old stockade was torn up, the rotted part sawn off, and it was then replaced with 4 feet in the ground and 6 feet above.

Suddenly, like a bombshell, in 1885 the news of the second Riel rebellion burst over the western prairies and a startled Canada. The agitated people turned to the hopelessly-outnumbered mounted police as their only hope of protection. At Fort Saskatchewan Inspector Griesbach began putting the fort in a state of defence, the news of the Frog Lake massacre² accelerating his activities. Four bastions were erected, and 20-foot lengths of uncut firewood were placed with their butts buried in a trench inside the fort and the tops projecting at an angle outwards and spiked to the top of the stockade. Two bastions were constructed, one on the north side of the main gate and the other opposite it on the east side of the fort. These were joined by a stockade, thus dividing the fort into two halves. The women and children were placed in the northern half, which was felt to be the strongest part. Further, in case of siege, it was decided to dig a well

¹Edmonton was a sub-post of Fort Saskatchewan under Battleford.

²Frog Lake was some 30 miles north-west of Fort Pitt (north-east of present-day Lloydminster). A. O. MacRae (*History of the Province of Alberta*, Vol. I, p. 403) says: "Two French priests and several whites were basely murdered by a party of Crees belonging to Big Bear's band. Fort Pitt was threatened by these Indians, but through the prompt action of Inspector Dickens, a son of the famous novelist, the Fort was evacuated, and the inmates escaped down the river to Battleford."

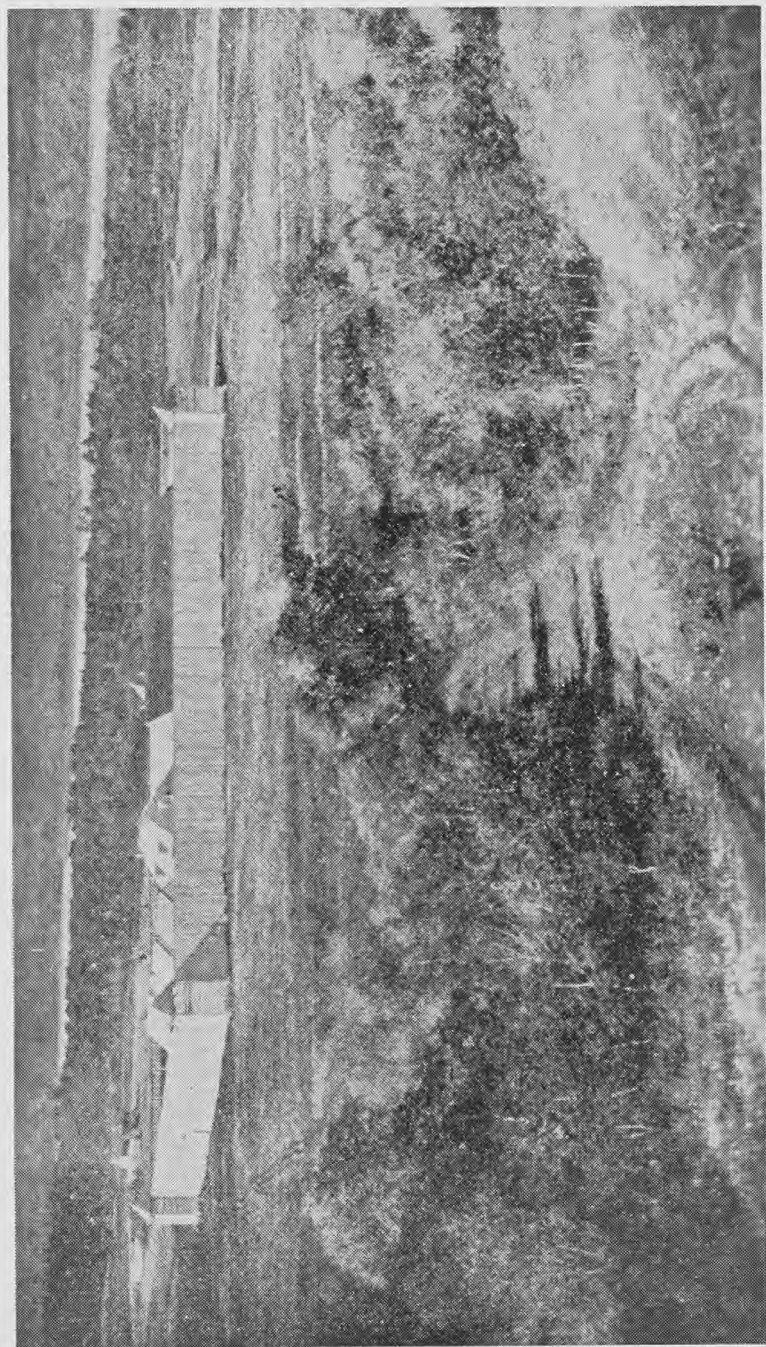


Photo Courtesy R.C.M.P., Regina

Fort Saskatchewan, probably about 1885

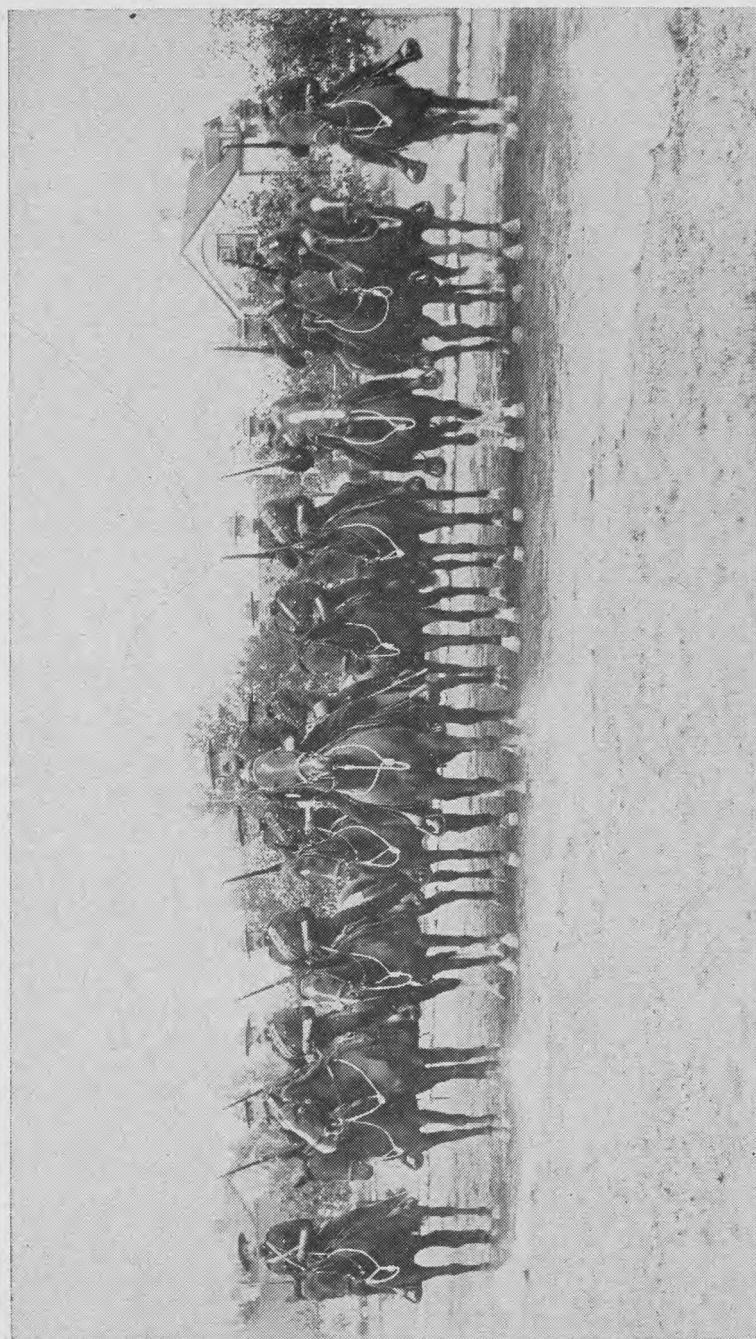
inside the fort. Charlie Henderson, a half-breed reputed to have some skill in water divining, was set to work 'prospecting' before a capacity audience. Finally, the forked willow turned down about six paces from the stable door, exactly the place the Sergeant-Major had selected. Griesbach immediately spoke up: "No, no, Charlie. I want the well midway between the guardroom and the stable, so that if either building catches fire the men will not be driven away from the pump by the heat of the burning building." Obliginglly the search was resumed, and, after the appropriate ceremonies, surprisingly enough the willow turned down again exactly midway between the guardroom and the stable. Wisely the Sergeant-Major said nothing. And, strange to say, when the well was dug, water was struck at 30 feet with a 10-foot stand of water in the well. During the rebellion more than 100 people from the surrounding country fled to the Fort for protection, and the excitement was intense. A request came from the citizens of Edmonton that the police abandon Fort Saskatchewan and concentrate on the defence of Edmonton, but Griesbach declined. He reminded them that he had a large number of women and children who could not be left unprotected, that Edmonton had a larger establishment and more arms, and finally that as a soldier he would never abandon his post unless instructed to do so by a superior officer, driven out or burnt out. However, despite the terrific tension at this time, no incidents were reported from the immediate locality.

It will be remembered that the garrison at the fort in 1885 was a meagre 20 men, even though the force as a whole had grown from 300 to about 500 men. After the rebellion the police force was increased to about 1000 men and in 1885 Fort Saskatchewan became the headquarters of 'G' division, which was constituted under Superintendent A. H. Griesbach, the strength of the new division being almost 100 men by the close of 1885. There

was insufficient room for these extra men in the barracks at Fort Saskatchewan, and the question of moving to Edmonton was raised again when the Commissioner recommended that 'G' division be moved to Edmonton where an entirely new building should be erected, and that a detachment only be left at Fort Saskatchewan. Turner reports: "The recommendation was carried out, leaving a small detachment at Fort Saskatchewan, but the following year¹ the entire division returned."² The Edmonton quarters were very poor and wholly unsuitable, and some of the new N.C.O.s were not up to the mark. As a result dissatisfaction among the men grew to such a pitch that a mutiny took place, known later amongst the police as the "big buck." The ringleaders were arrested and sent to Regina for trial, but the Commissioner himself came to Edmonton to investigate. He discovered the gross overcrowding and unfit quarters, with the result that a building programme was initiated at Fort Saskatchewan during 1886. The old stockade and bastions were torn down, and new stables and quarters were built, ready for the return of 'G' division in August. The barracks continued to expand over the years (to the east and south), until the ground enclosed in a wire-netting fence was from 30 to 40 acres. In 1887 further great improvements were made. A two-storey house for the Commanding Officer was built. A recreation and mess room (50 feet by 25 feet) was erected, the sergeants' quarters were enlarged, a guardroom provided, as well as a troop kitchen, saddler's shop, harness room, store, carpenter's shop and hospital stable. The square was levelled, and all buildings were mudded and whitewashed. Yet the advocates of a permanent move to Edmonton were heard increasingly clearly, for Fort Saskatchewan was off the beaten track and the headquarters of 'G' division should surely be at a major centre of population. Already an appropriate site

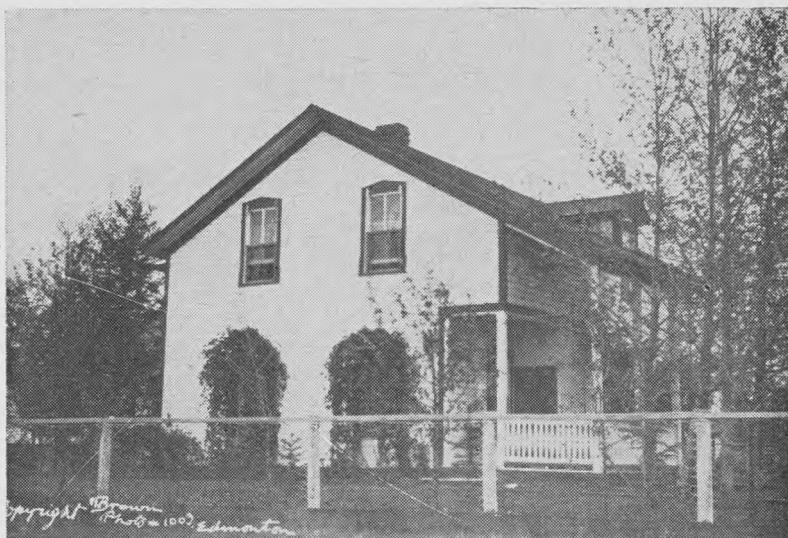
¹August 5th, 1886.

²J. P. Turner: *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 263.



Members of 'G' Division. Fort Saskatchewan, 1906

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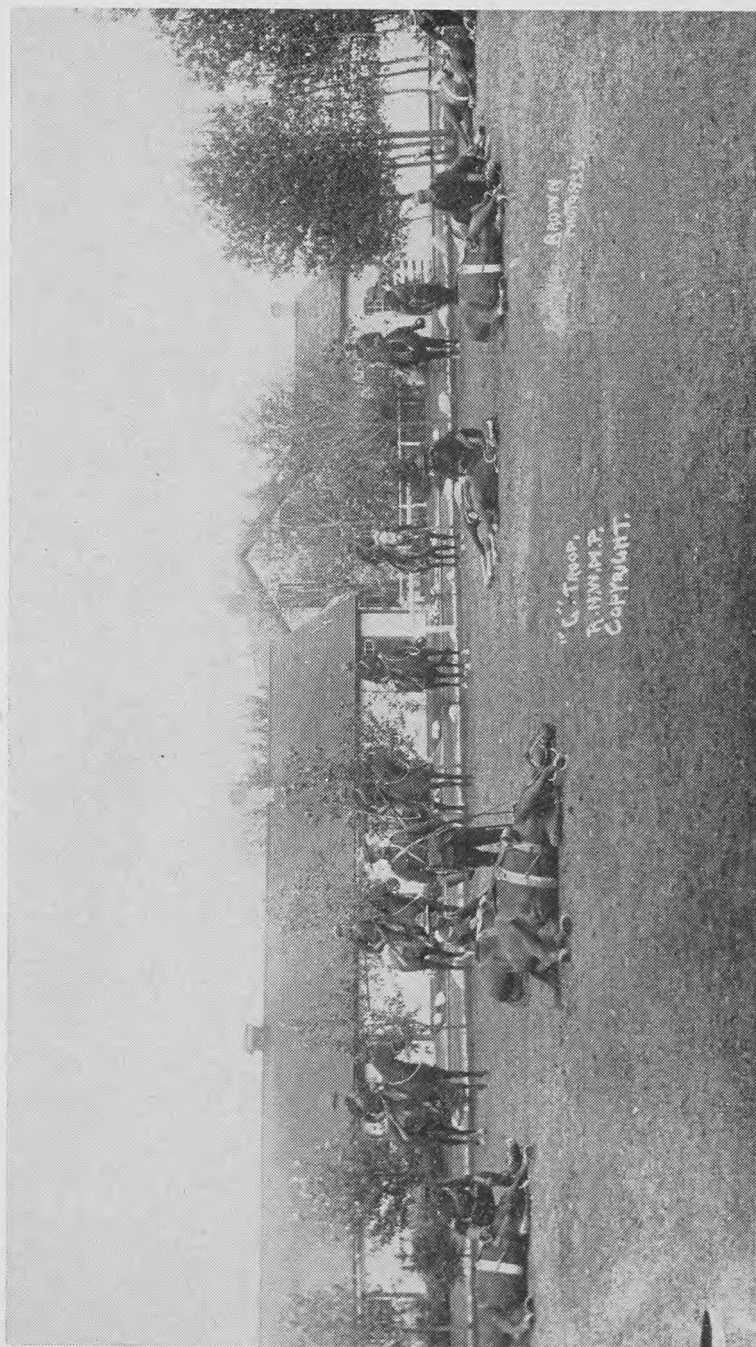
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Commanding Officer's Residence, May 24th, 1908

was being looked for in Edmonton, and in 1888 some suitable lots were procured.

The fort became the centre of the district in every sense of the word. The sound of the bugle regulated the activities of those living close by. The daily drill was a never-ceasing source of fascination to the children of the community. The patrol system was extensive, the horses of 'G' division travelling 71,528 miles in the one year of 1888 alone, and there was a constant coming and going at the fort. It was also the centre, not only for the official police duties, but in time of trouble and distress. In 1889 almost the entire district surrounding Fort Saskatchewan was burnt in prairie fires¹ which were particularly bad that year. High winds prevailed, and fires thought to be extinguished would often break out anew. The men of 'G' division were tireless in assisting settlers as far west as St. Albert to save their properties. During

¹Prairie fires were especially to be dreaded in the early days. To indicate how such a fire could travel, there is an item in the Edmonton Bulletin for October 31st, 1895, reporting how a prairie fire eleven days before had jumped the river (a distance of some 1000 feet) about five miles below Fort Saskatchewan.



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Members of 'G' Division at Drill. Fort Saskatchewan, 1906

the most threatening periods teams were kept harnessed ready for emergency calls, and wet bags were kept in wagons for immediate use. Moreover, the fort was not only a haven of refuge in time of trouble or danger, it was also a centre of gaiety. To the Police Balls the whole countryside came, and dancing would continue for 3 days and 3 nights. Rooms in the barracks were set apart for the women, while the men 'dossed down' where they could. Meals were served continuously, the fiddlers relieved each other, and a pair of moccasins only lasted a night. Minstrel shows and suppers provided added entertainment. One night's festivities were reported in the *Edmonton Bulletin* for February 11th, 1882. The police gave a minstrel entertainment in the barracks attended by about 300 people. Refreshments were served at 6 p.m., followed by the show. Then the room was cleared for dancing which lasted until daylight. Supper was served at midnight and breakfast at 6 a.m., after which the crowd dispersed.

Thus, in times grave and gay, the men at the fort played their part and left their impress on the country. Truly an era passed when the advocates of the move to Edmonton were finally heard and had their way, and the headquarters of 'G' division was moved in 1909, new barracks erected and the men installed by September, 1913, and the sound of the bugle was heard in the Fort on the Saskatchewan no more. As W. A. Griesbach writes: "By the pale light of the moon in fancy one may still see and hear on the old fort site ghostly figures, stalwart and stern-faced, in scarlet and gold, riding in and out of the main gate on errands of justice or mercy. The 'old guard' presents arms to the 'new guard,' the stable picket saunters slowly through the stables, lantern in hand, the bugle again sounds 'Last Post' . . . 'All present and correct, sir'."¹

¹W. A. Griesbach: *op. cit.*, p. 50.

Chapter 4

1880-1889: THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Presbyterian Church was comparatively late in establishing work in Alberta. In 1866 Rev. James Nisbit had come up the Saskatchewan to explore the possibilities of extending the work west. He came as far as Edmonton and held a service there. In 1872 Rev. Principal Grant made a trip from coast to coast, and held a service in the ballroom of the Hudson's Bay fort in Edmonton. However, these were but isolated events, and the trips more of an exploratory nature. Yet by 1880, in and around Edmonton, there was a little band of Presbyterians which was making repeated requests for a Minister. Their pleas were at last heard, and in 1881 Rev. Andrew B. Baird was sent out to this little frontier post. He had just returned from post-graduate work in Edinburgh and Germany, after a distinguished career as student at the University of Toronto and Knox College. He was ordained on August 16th, 1881, shortly before leaving for the west. The Canadian Pacific Railway had not yet reached the prairie, and so at Winnipeg Mr. Baird bought himself a horse, buckboard, tent, cooking utensils, and an ample supply of provisions. Thus equipped, he set out alone on the long strenuous journey to Edmonton. On the way he had to build his own rafts to cross the rivers, but despite the arduous nature of the trip he made the distance in 31 days travelling, arriving in Edmonton on Saturday, October 29th, 1881. Despite the obvious rigours of such a trek across the prairies, it was typical of the man that by the following Thursday (November 3rd) a meeting was held at which the congregation was organized and a committee appointed to secure a place for worship. On Sunday, November 6th, he held a service at 11 a.m. in the Methodist Church, at that time vacant and loaned for the occasion. Before long the committee had secured an old storehouse on Jasper Avenue (at 98 St.) for use

by the congregation, and plans were laid for the building of a church. On the first anniversary of the organization of the congregation, on Sunday, November 5th, 1882, First Presbyterian Church, Edmonton, was formally opened.

Mr. Baird, however, was not content to spend his days in Edmonton alone. He was a vigorous man, thriving on hard work, and was continually reaching out to the outlying areas. He had already completed elementary organizational work at Belmont and Sturgeon River (Namao), and the new year had scarcely come in when he was out at Fort Saskatchewan holding a service in the fort for the mounted police and a few settlers. It was on January 8th, 1882, that Mr. Baird preached for the first time in the Fort, taking as his text: "Only be thou strong and very courageous."¹ The meeting place was a room in the fort used by the Commanding Officer as sitting-room, office and, upon occasion, court room. From then on the services were held regularly, every fourth Sunday, always in the same place, and they continued throughout his six-years' Ministry. The officer in command at the fort until the fall of 1883 was Captain Severe Gagnon, who, though Roman Catholic, was never absent from the services unless away on duty. His successor, A. H. Griesbach and his wife were equally regular.² In addition to Belmont, the Sturgeon and Fort Saskatchewan, Mr. Baird also began services at Clover Bar in the spring of 1883. He managed to get theological students for these fields during the summer months, but the whole burden fell upon his shoulders during the winter when the students returned east to their colleges.

¹Joshua 1:7.

²Other members of the congregation were Sergeant-Major Belcher and his wife, whose child Mary Northcote he baptized in the summer of 1882, his two brothers Percy and Harry, John Mewhort, Peter Coutts, Maitland, and Henderson. Among the civilians were Walter Ross with his mother and other members of the family, the Langs, the Tabers, and from across the river Philip Heimnck with his wife and family.



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"In Sight of Fort Saskatchewan," 1898

The year Mr. Baird arrived in Edmonton there was much speculation as to the route of the C.P.R., and rumours were persistent that it would go through the Edmonton district. Furthermore, at this time there was a strong rivalry existing between the settlements of Edmonton, Clover Bar and Fort Saskatchewan, each of which looked forward to becoming the metropolis. Edmonton in 1882 consisted of only 12 log houses, exclusive of the fort and its buildings.¹ In fact, by 1885 there were only between 35 and 40 houses in the 'City'.¹ As a result of all this current excitement a real-estate boom took place in all three settlements in the years 1881 and 1882. Philip Heimink, for example, bought J. Halpenny's claim on the north side of the river at Fort Saskatchewan in November, 1881, and also took up a claim on the opposite side of the river, making in all one mile square with the river in the centre.² The whole property included the greater part of the island and the best railway crossing on the river. He had this estate surveyed into lots by Walter and George Beatty, and by November, 1882, was advertising 1000 lots for sale in what he called the "City of Saskatchewan." Part of his advertisement in the Edmonton Bulletin reads: "P. Heimink, who has the most promising sites in this City, offers great inducements to persons who wish to possess themselves of valuable property in this the great city of the North-West. The advantages of this site for a city are undisputed and not to be surpassed by any position on the North Saskatchewan . . ."³ A. MacDonald and the Lamoureux brothers also had their property surveyed into lots, and on November 25th, 1882, in the Edmonton Bulletin were advertising

¹These figures are quoted in A. O. MacRae: *History of the Province of Alberta*, Vol. I, p. 395.

²Edmonton Bulletin, November 19th, 1881.

³Edmonton Bulletin, November 4th, 1882. The issue of November 18th, 1882, reported 41 lots sold within the previous week.

460 lots for sale on their estate in "Saskatchewan City, N.W.T." However, in the spring of 1883 it was announced that the C.P.R. would go through Calgary—and smash went the boom! Before the arrival of the C.P.R. in Calgary all mail for Fort Saskatchewan and Edmonton came direct from Winnipeg. In July, 1875, the Hudson's Bay Company's steamboat "Northcote" arrived, the first steamboat ever to navigate the North Saskatchewan. Upon the arrival of the steel in Calgary Messrs. Leeson and Scott carried the mail from there to Edmonton, along with other freight, making fortnightly trips at an advertised rate of 10c per pound.

The Fort Saskatchewan district did not easily give up its proud name of "Saskatchewan City," for it was carried over a couple of years later into the name of the Roman Catholic School District on the north bank of the river. There Mrs. Patrick Curran had begun teaching as early as 1879, but on December 13th, 1884, it was decided to proceed with the official establishment of a School District, the necessary vote being held on Wednesday, January 21st, 1885. The School District was officially proclaimed on March 2nd, 1885, as "School District of Saskatchewan, Catholic Public School District No. Two of the North-West Territories",¹ and the election of trustees was called for April 11th of that year. The trustees elected were Francois Lamoureux, James Reid, and Theophile Lamoureux. This was the first Roman Catholic School District to be proclaimed in Alberta,² and though thirteen Protestant School Districts had been proclaimed

¹*North-West Territories Gazette*, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 31ff.

²No. 1, proclaimed on February 28th, 1885, was the School District of Bellevue in the present Province of Saskatchewan (*North-West Territories Gazette*, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 28ff). No. 3, proclaimed on May 5th, 1885, was at St. Albert (*North-West Territories Gazette*, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 80ff).

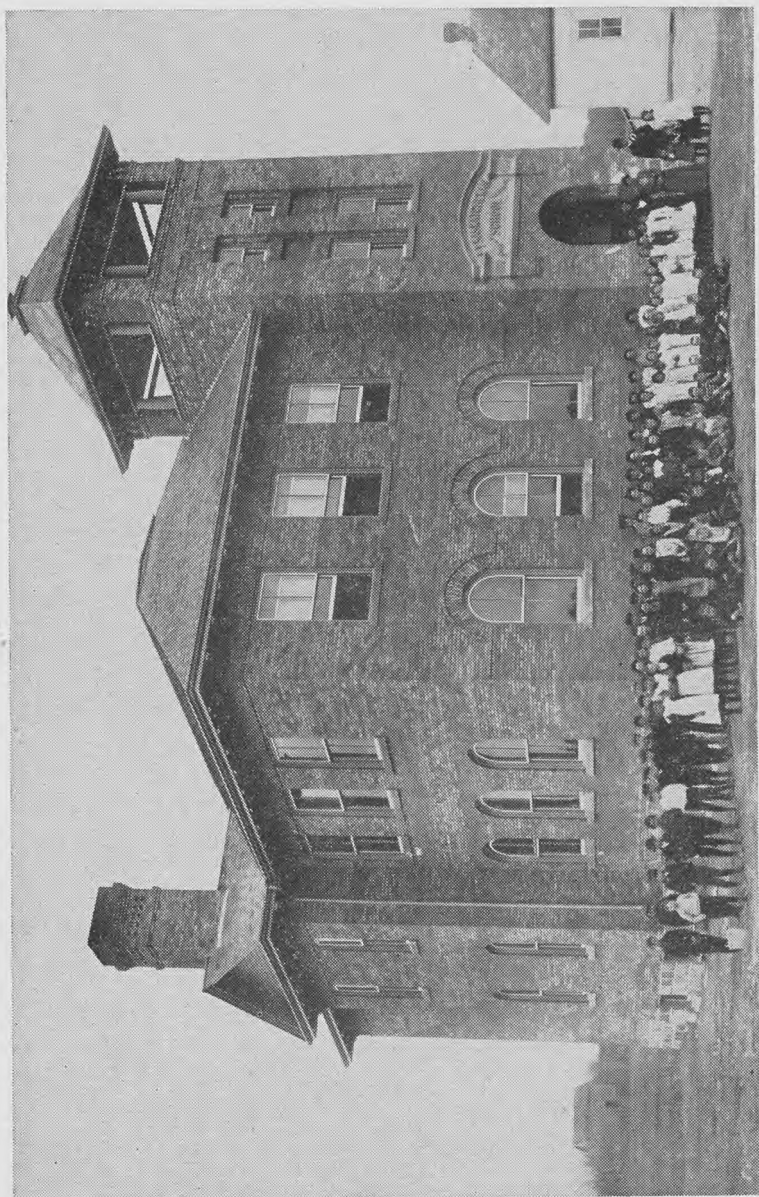
in the North-West Territories before this, only one of them was in Alberta.¹

On the south side of the river a school district was not established until 1887. Shortly before that time A. H. Griesbach had engaged the brother of S. B. ("Sam") Steele as tutor for his children. James B. Steele, who was in delicate health, lived in the Griesbach home but did not stay very long, leaving slightly prior to the establishment of the school district. About the same time Mrs. Ingles came out from Scotland to teach in Canada, and this fact, together with a concern over the children's education, led to the decision to open a public school. The wish of the people was endorsed by a vote, and the first meeting of electors for a School District was held on Tuesday, March 29th, 1887, with the result that the trustees elected were Phileas Brunette, Charles Henderson, and Stuart D. Mulkins. The necessary preliminaries having been completed, the "School District of Fort Saskatchewan, Protestant Public School District No. 91 of the North-West Territories" was officially proclaimed on April 18th, 1887.² Mrs. Ingles became the first teacher and taught in her own home which was built for that purpose (located just south of the present C.N.R. tracks). She taught a variety of subjects, including Latin, and her pupils included about 9 white children along with some half-breeds and full-blooded Indians. Seven years later, under the signature of the Lieutenant-Governor and the date of May 22nd, 1894, the school trustees were empowered to borrow \$1,000 for the purpose of securing a school site and building a school house.³ A large one-roomed log building was erected on the site of the old brick school on 104 St., presumably a short while after-

¹The School District of Edmonton, Protestant Public School District No. 7, proclaimed on February 3rd, 1885 (*North-West Territories Gazette*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 9ff).

²*North-West Territories Gazette*, Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 69ff.

³*North-West Territories Gazette*, Vol. 11, No. 11, p. 10.



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Fort Saskatchewan School, 1905

wards. The teacher at this time is said to have been Mrs. Sweetapple.¹

Rev. Andrew B. Baird and the congregation at Fort Saskatchewan were made so welcome at the fort that the people felt no urge for the building of a church immediately, and it was not until the winter of 1886-87 that plans for the erection of a church building were implemented. A bee was held, and logs cut and hewed, most of them in the valley where the best timber was to be found, though some were from the island in the river. In the spring of 1887 the water in the river rose to an unusually high level and floated away the logs that had been cut on the island, and so set back considerably the task of construction.

That summer a young Minister, who was to exercise a long and honoured Ministry of over 43 years in First Presbyterian Church, Edmonton, set out from the east for this little frontier settlement of about 350 people, as he later recalled.² On June 27th, 1887, Rev. David George McQueen arrived in Edmonton by stage-coach from Calgary, having been ordained en route by the Regina Presbytery on June 21st. He was met by Mr. Baird, who certainly was not going to molly-coddle this tenderfoot, and he initiated him into the life of the west the hard way. One of the first questions put to young David McQueen was, "Can you plough?", after which, with Mr. Baird leading the horse, the two men proceeded to cultivate a large crop of potatoes put in near the Edmonton Manse by Andrew Grant, student that summer in charge of the outlying fields. Before Mr. Baird left that year these potatoes were sold for \$40 and the money sent to the Home Mission Committee in Toronto. Not only did Mr. Baird set his new assistant's hand to the literal plough, but also he soon had him busy on the mission field. The

¹Cited in *History of Fort Saskatchewan*, written by the Social Studies II class in Fort Saskatchewan School in 1947.

²E. A. Corbett: *McQueen of Edmonton*, p.36.

first piece of unfinished business was the church at Fort Saskatchewan. Accordingly, amid mosquitoes and black flies, the two Ministers of the Gospel set to work to cut a sufficient number of logs to replace those that had been lost in the floods that spring. Such was the life of the pioneer missionary! Especially when it is recalled that the roads often were impassable, and that all travel had to be undertaken by saddle, buckboard, or jumper, and it frequently took four hours to drive to the Fort. On August 17th, 1887, Mr. Baird left Edmonton for Winnipeg to join the faculty of Manitoba College, where he remained until his retirement in 1931. Mr. McQueen was left in sole charge of the work, and the erection and dedication of the Presbyterian Church at Fort Saskatchewan took place under his leadership.

In the spring of 1888, with characteristic energy, Mr. McQueen turned from the completion of one church to the beginning of another—this time at Clover Bar. In a letter written at that time he wrote: "I spent Monday putting on the finishing touches to the pulpit at Clover Bar, and putting the battens on the gable ends. On Monday and Tuesday of next week I purpose going with another man to plaster between the logs of the building, and then it will be ready for services. My next building job will be the unfinished school at Stony Plain."¹

It was men of this zeal and practical fervour that established the Presbyterian Church in Fort Saskatchewan, and, indeed, in Alberta, for the pioneer work in the far west was already being recognized by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. In 1887 a new Presbytery was formed by that body, which was to be called "The Calgary Presbytery." It included the whole of Alberta, a part of western Saskatchewan, a good deal of southern British Columbia, and its northern boundary was set down boldly as the Arctic Sea.

¹E. A. Corbett: *op. cit.*, p.49f.

Chapter 5

1890-1899: CONSOLIDATION AND THE FIRST SETTLED MINISTER

For seven years the newly-built log Presbyterian Church carried on without a resident Minister, and the work flourished and reached out into the surrounding countryside. By 1892, for example, the people of the Agricola district felt that the time had come to erect a a community church (nominally Presbyterian in order to secure a grant!) open to all Protestant denominations. Accordingly, on December 20th, 1892, it was decided to proceed immediately with the construction of a frame church¹ on the south-east corner of William Walker's farm, the church to be known as "St. Paul's Presbyterian Church." On January 12th, 1893, the first Board of Managers² was elected, and it was reported that the church would be ready to be opened on January 22nd. The debt on the church was finally paid up in August, 1895. There is an intriguing minute of a meeting held on November 13th, 1895, the motion requesting "that the secretary write to those parties having friends buried in the church ground requesting them to remove the bodies as the property is not large enough nor suitable and as there is a cemetery at Fort Saskatchewan." One wonders how this was to be implemented and if it was carried out. Certainly it is recorded that by January, 1899, the need for a cemetery at or near St. Paul's was expressed at a Board meeting. The Ministers were consulted, and at a congregational meeting on June 21st, 1899, it was moved "that the Church ground be used as a cemetery and that the Managers of the Presbyterian Church at Agricola have sole charge of same." In the early days of St. Paul's, the Beaver Hills School District was per-

¹Size 18 feet by 24 feet by 10 feet to the plate.

²Arthur Reith (Chairman), G. B. Carter (Secretary-Treasurer), and Alex. Adamson.

mitted to use the church for holding school until the school house was erected in 1898. By the end of 1898, due to the "scarcity of Presbyterians," it was agreed that members of all denominations who worshipped in the church should be entitled to a voice in the election of Managers and be eligible for office. The church continued to be used by both Presbyterians and Methodists (and Anglicans in the early days) until in 1913 the Methodist Church decided to drop Agricola and divide the congregation between Yorkville and Partridge Hill. The records show that the last service held in St. Paul's Church, Agricola, took place on May 20th, 1928. The church was eventually sold to Carl Krebs, who moved it and used it as an extension to his farm home. All that remains today is the little cemetery out in the country, seven miles south-east of the Fort.

The first full-time Minister to take up residence in Fort Saskatchewan was Rev. Alexander Forbes, who came from Aberdeen, Scotland, arriving in December, 1894.¹ The mission station at this time consisted of Sturgeon (Namao), Horse Hill, Agricola, Partridge Hill, and Fort Saskatchewan.² An important event took place within a year—important for the community, but even more so for Mr. Forbes. In 1895 his fiancée, Agnes Sorrel, came out from Scotland, and in September of that year they were married by Mr. McQueen in the old Presbyterian Church in Edmonton. The 'Manse' to which Mr.

¹There is some delightful grammar in the Edmonton Bulletin for Monday, December 31st, 1894, which announces his arrival in this way: "Rev. Alexander Forbes, M.A., B.D., arrived on Thursday's train from Aberdeen, Scotland, to take permanent charge of Presbyterian mission work at Fort Saskatchewan and vicinity."

²The original members at the Fort at this time were Walter Ross and his mother, Mrs. J. F. Forbes, Miss Ross, and Mrs. Ingles. For many years Walter Ross and his brother William lived with their mother and sister. The brothers and sister never did get married. Walter Ross eventually sold his farm to J. P. Galloway, who still resides on it.



Agnes Sorrel Forbes

Forbes brought his bride was a one-roomed shack formerly used as an office for a lumber yard. The advent of Mrs. Forbes soon changed the bachelor's shack into a Manse, open to all who came, and she quickly endeared herself to the people of the community, winning a unique place in their hearts.

It was early very clear that a new church and Manse were needed. Settlers were coming in and the work was growing. There was very little money in the country, but the material was close at hand and the people were willing to work in cutting and hauling the logs. The Government had made a grant of two acres behind the present railway station (not to be built until some 10 years later) and facing upon Government St. (101 St.).¹ Mrs. Forbes entered upon her work with characteristic zeal, and turned the old church into a restaurant, providing substantial meals for all who came to work on the new building.² It was a great day when the church was finished, and on October 13th, 1895, Rev. D. G. McQueen came down from Edmonton for the opening ceremonies. The next year a Manse was erected, being completed and occupied in September, 1896,³ and it soon became a centre to which the settlers for miles around looked for help and comfort. Mrs. Forbes had had a training course

¹The original location of the little old log church was on the river bank near the barracks' hospital (north-west of the present court house). In 1895 this was transferred to the north-west corner of the two-acre grant of land, prior to the building of the new church.

²The Edmonton Bulletin for February 25th, 1895, reported the letting of the contract for the new church by the Presbyterians. On August 5th, the newspaper carried a progress report which indicated that the Messrs. Ball were the builders.

³At the Edmonton Presbytery meeting of December 1st, 1896, a \$500 loan was asked of the Church and Manse Board to clear the debt on the newly-erected Manse at Fort Saskatchewan. Part of the Home Mission report to the Edmonton Presbytery meeting of March 20th, 1897 reads: "The Manse at Fort Saskatchewan was completed and entered upon early in September last."

in medicine and nursing at Glasgow, and frequently she would be called to homes where there was sickness. She made a significant contribution to the district in a time when hospital and nursing services were unavailable. At one time a family of seven children was orphaned, but Mrs. Forbes immediately took them all to the Manse, and cleaned, clothed and fed them for months, until relatives from the States came and took away five of them. She carried on Sunday School at two different points and occasionally took a service in the country when her husband was on duty elsewhere. A member of her Sunday School class at Agricola recalls that one Sunday Mrs. Forbes had no means of transportation. However, rather than disappoint her class, she walked in sub-zero weather the seven miles to Agricola. Mr. Forbes was able to pick her up on his way home from further out in the country where he had been holding service. It is surely more than fitting that, because of her significant and varied contribution to the whole community, her name should be remembered in the present Agnes Forbes' Lodge, a home for elderly ladies in Fort Saskatchewan.¹ Her heart would have been right in this project.

Services in the early days were held at Agricola and Partridge Hill one Sunday, and Horse Hill² and Namao² the next, with Fort Saskatchewan every Sunday evening. Pioneer church work never has been an easy task, and Mr. Forbes writes of one experience: "Riding down from Namao 12 miles, I had as usual to cross the

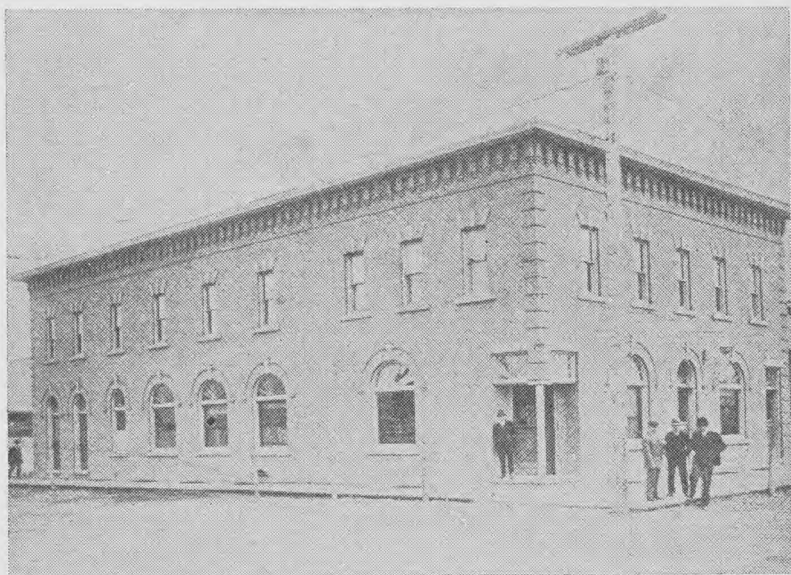
¹Operated under the auspices of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service of the United Church of Canada.

²A division in the mission field took place at the end of April, 1901. It was felt that the river was the natural boundary line, and so from this time Mr. Forbes did not take services at these points across the river.



Photo Courtesy Ed Mohr

The Mansion House Hotel, 1908



The Mansion House Hotel, 1910 or 1911

river at the Fort. Winter was nearly over, the ice was rotting, and I urged my horse over the ice. He made a start, got over part way, when the ice broke. I jumped from the saddle rather than let my horse flounder and cut himself by jagged ice. I was soaking wet, no time to go home to get dried and something to eat. The hour of service was at hand. I preached and conducted the service as if nothing had happened, after I got my horse attended to, and it was a good service too, but very few of the people knew of my experience.”¹ However, there was always the lighter side to pioneering and there was one story from these days that Mr. Forbes was particularly fond of telling. It concerned a young couple that he married. The young Metis bridegroom was in the unfortunate position of having no money to give him for marrying them, but he did promise Mr. Forbes a load of hay for his horse whenever he should need it. Some time later, Mr. Forbes paid a visit to this Metis and reminded him of his offer, only to be turned down flat with the laconic explanation, “She isn’t worth it!”

Shortly after the arrival of Mr. Forbes the Anglican Parish of St. George’s was established. Anglican connections with Fort Saskatchewan go back to Canon Newton, who arrived in Edmonton in September, 1875. The next year he homesteaded on land some seven miles downstream and built there a home and a chapel, the site becoming known as “The Hermitage.” His missionary zeal knew no bounds, and he would ride up to 50 miles out from Edmonton. Upon occasion he would even go as far as Victoria, and on one trip he very nearly lost his life crossing the Sturgeon River. Fort Saskatchewan was well within his territory, and he held many services there for the men at the barracks, many of whom were Anglican. In 1876 he reported to the Society for the

¹Letter dated October 17th, 1940.

Propagation of the Gospel¹ that Divine Service had been held at Fort Saskatchewan 35 times. One of Canon Newton's early misadventures entailed being arrested for "feloniously and wilfully appropriating and killing a cow." He had returned from a missionary visit to Saddle Lake, and while he was away his cattle, which were pasturing near the barracks at Fort Saskatchewan, were being rounded up. One animal had an indistinct mark or brand, and Newton was not sure if it belong to him or not. He called in several men for their opinion, but all agreed that it was his, and so the cow was killed for beef. Newton then set out again for Saddle Lake. About the same time Joseph Lamoureux missed a cow. He heard of the one Newton had killed, and, while he was away, went over and inspected the hide which he identified as that of his missing cow. Immediately he got out a warrant for his arrest. Newton was released on \$800 bail, but apparently the case was dropped as no more was heard of it. The work elsewhere claimed more and more of Canon Newton's time, and eventually the regular services at Fort Saskatchewan were discontinued. Occasional services and mid-week meetings were maintained, however,² until Rev. Geoffrey C. d'Easum began to serve the Fort from a neighbouring parish a short while before he moved to Fort Saskatchewan. Mr. d'Easum was the priest-in-charge of the parish of St. Alban the Martyr, Beaver Lake, although no church was erected there. After initiating the work at Beaver Lake, he moved early in 1895 to the Fort, his transportation being a horse called 'Tomactae,' which meant 'Crooked Legs.' Almost immediately after Mr. d'Easum's arrival, the deed of erection constituting the parish was issued on February 5th, and later in the same year the first St. George's

¹Report, December 20th, 1876.

²There is reference to one held in the Palace Hotel on Sunday, February 12th, 1888, at which, despite the stormy weather, quite a large congregation was present.



Photo Courtesy Fort Saskatchewan School

The First St. George's Anglican Church

Anglican Church was built almost directly in front of the present site of the Rectory. Within a year or two the Rectory was built by the brothers Jack and Alf Karran, and it is still in use, having been moved over on to a foundation. The parish gradually moved towards self-support, and by the time of the formation of the new diocese of Edmonton in 1913 it was firmly established. By 1949 the question of a new church building was being considered, and the matter was laid before the annual meeting early that year. Power to carry on with this project was granted to the incoming vestry who appointed a building committee, and construction was begun on a site 75 to 100 feet north of the old church. The final completion was delayed considerably, but the new St. George's Church was finally dedicated and opened for services on Sunday, October 28th, 1951. The present Rector, Rev. S. H. F. Jarvis, was inducted into the parish in January, 1955, and serves the parishes of Redwater, Bon Accord, Gibbons, and Fort Saskatchewan.

At the beginning of the decade a group of immigrants from the province of Galicia, in what was then Austria, arrived and settled in the district east of Fort Saskatchewan. Most of them originated from the two villages of Brigidau and Josefsberg, which were about eight miles apart. The whole area was becoming overpopulated, and it was imperative that some families should move away and establish themselves anew. Thus, during the years 1888 to 1890, a considerable number of families left not only the district but also their homeland, and they took out homesteads in ranching country some 30 miles from Medicine Hat. They built homes for themselves (mostly sod shacks) and named the settlement Josefsberg after the home of many of them. They tried to farm the land, but for two years their crops were a failure due to the hot chinook winds which came over the mountains and far onto the prairies, scorching everything in their path. It seemed impossible to stay there, and so they began to look elsewhere for a home. They heard of some free land available several hundred miles to the north-west, and sent several men to investigate. They selected two locations, one at what is now Stony Plain and the other about five miles east of Fort Saskatchewan. The Dominion Government was approached and agreed to exchange the land near Medicine Hat for some in the new areas, and the Immigration Department also made arrangements with the C.P.R. to move the settlers and their effects free of charge to the end of the steel at Red Deer. Thus, in April, 1891, they all boarded the special freight train and set off on their search for new homes. At Red Deer everything was loaded on to wagons drawn by oxen, and the trek to Edmonton began. It was a journey of almost two weeks, and they arrived at

their destination on May 4th, 1891. One group¹ decided to go east, and the men went on ahead to the new homesteads to build houses and shelter for their stock for the coming winter. Some of their families found shelter in Edmonton for the time being, while others were able to rent two farms with buildings in the Oliver and Horse Hill districts before they could join the men. The new settlement east of Fort Saskatchewan again was called Josefsberg, and it was truly in virgin territory, there being only two settlers² in the whole area between the Fort and Andrew. However, more people came into the community within the next few years, and the need for a school was soon felt. As a result, on December 18th, 1893, the "Josephberg Public School District No. 296 of the North-West Territories" was proclaimed.³ The first secretary of the school board, Gus Doze, began to spell the name of the district in his own way ("Josephburg"), and so it has remained ever since. The following year (January 9th, 1894) the trustees were empowered to borrow \$600 to build and furnish a frame school house.⁴

The German-speaking people of the new community belonged to three different denominations, and services were held in various homes by visiting Ministers.⁵ Rev. G. F. Vetter⁶ of the German Reformed Church, who had

¹In this group were old Mr. Becker and his son Jacob; George Becker and his sons Frank and George; Friedrich Mohr and his sons Philip, John, Henry, and Mike; Jacob Thomas, his step-son Philip Mohr and his two sons-in-law Jacob Hennig and Adam Rippel; Franz Thomas Sr. and his sons Henry and Philip; Adam Berg, his sons Adam and John, and his sons-in-law Jacob Broeder and John Krebs; Jacob Mohr; and Frank J. Thomas.

²Richard Guthrie and Albert Nelson, two ex-Mounties, who were both running small herds of cattle.

³*North-West Territories Gazette*, Vol. 11, No. 1, p.2f.

⁴*North-West Territories Gazette*, Vol. 11, No. 2, p.3.

⁵e.g. Rev. Arthur Whiteside of the Methodist Church, who preached at Josephburg every second Sunday between April 15th, 1896, and June 3rd, 1897.

⁶Rev. G. Vetter was mentioned in the Edmonton Bulletin for September 26th, 1895, as the German Presbyterian missionary at Beaver Lake.

a farm close by, made application to the Edmonton Presbytery on July 14th, 1896, for standing in the Presbyterian Church, and in the minutes of Presbytery for September 1st of that year he is listed as at Josephburg. Attempts at uniting the various religious groups were not too successful, and for a time there was a considerable amount of friction. After almost ten years a number of the younger men¹ felt it was high time that something should be done to bring the various factions together. Accordingly, a meeting was held early in 1901 at which these men were successful in securing an agreement that all the German-speaking settlers should unite in one congregation. Because of all that had gone before and as an expression of faith and hope in the future, the name chosen for the church was 'Friedens Gemeinde' (Peace Congregation). A real union was effected as a result, one that has never seriously been threatened since. Several years previously Jacob Hennig donated land for a cemetery and the father of Jacob Becker Sr. gave six acres for a Parsonage. On this site (across the road from the present Parsonage) a log building was erected almost entirely by volunteer labour. A call by the congregation was sent to Rev. C. W. F. Graeser, who accepted and came to Josephburg as the first Minister in April, 1901. Services were held in the school house at first, but an early decision was made to build a church which was constructed on land donated by Jacob Thomas Sr.²

New families³ were still coming into the district and before long the old church was far too small for the needs of the community. Early in 1910 it was decided to build

¹Among them were Philip and John Mohr, Frank and George Becker, and Jacob Hennig.

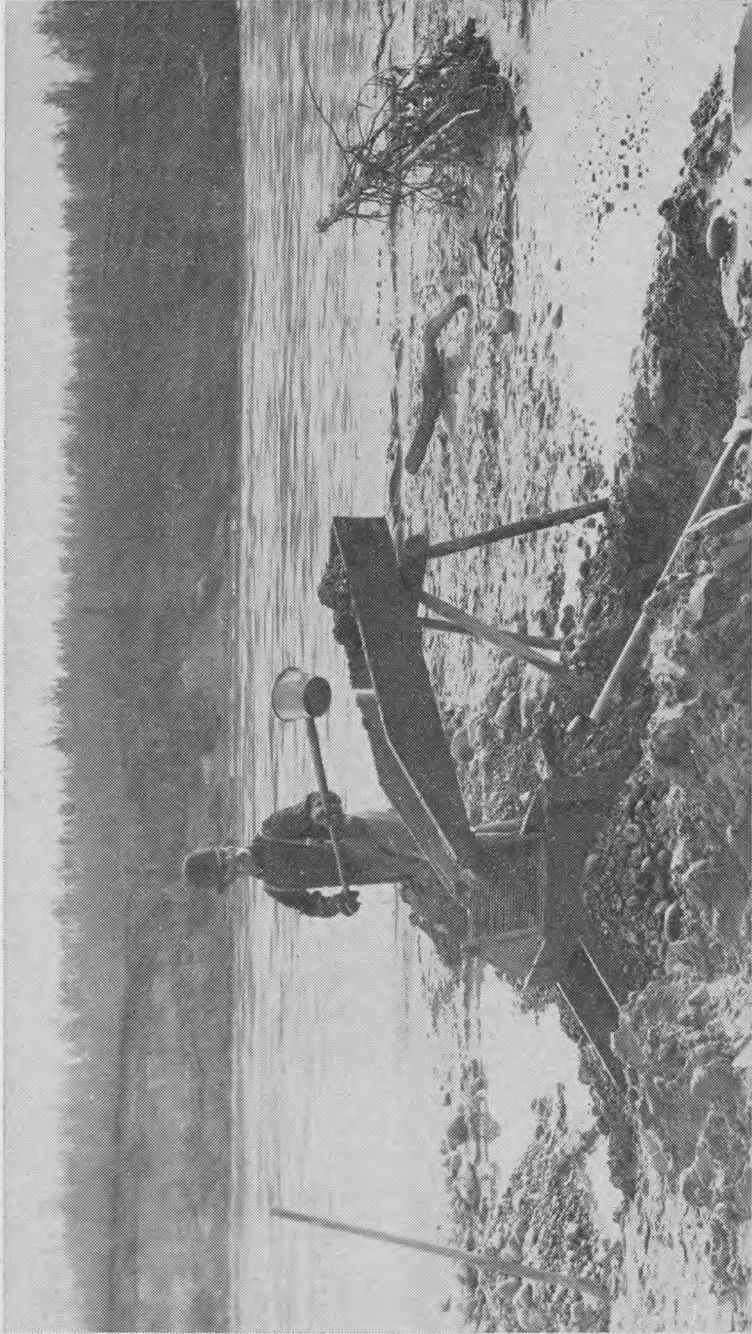
²This frame church was erected on the site of the present church.

³These families included: Karl Manz, Daniel Krebs, Wilhelm Frey, Peter Unterschütz, Ludwig Kulak, Valentin Gauf, Philip Thomas Sr., George Philip Mohr, Stefan Koroluk, Peter Bomerlan, Mathias Schmidt, Heinrich Geistlinger, and Andreas Schmidt.

a larger church, which was to be brick veneered and on a stone foundation. This is the church that is still in use, though in 1926 it was raised three feet and a basement excavated under it, thus giving extra room for meetings and other activities. The first Parsonage was destroyed by fire on January 2nd, 1916, and a new two-storey, brick-veneered Parsonage was built in the church grounds as soon as the basement could be dug. In January, 1923, it was agreed at the annual meeting to incorporate the congregation in order to give it legal status, and to comply with the Act the name was changed to 'Evangelical Reformed Josephburg Congregation.' Throughout the years the church has had a profound influence upon the community, and, through its members who have moved away, upon many other areas and churches. One boy of the district, the son of Jacob Hennig, entered the Ministry and is now the Rev. Edmund L. Hennig, of Elk Hart Lake, Wisconsin. The fiftieth anniversary celebrations were held in 1951, and the church continues its witness today under the leadership of Rev. John F. Krieger, who began his Ministry at Josephburg in May, 1935.

At Fort Saskatchewan the settlements on both sides of the river were beginning to grow during the last decade of the century. Gold panning was attracting a few prospectors to the district. Thomas H. Clover¹ had arrived in Edmonton as early as 1859, having heard of the discovery of gold on the North Saskatchewan, and he kept working, when low water permitted, for at least four years. The place where he met with most success was a bar east of Edmonton which became known as 'Clover's Bar,' and subsequently the name Clover Bar was applied to the whole district. Most of the old-timers at Fort Saskatchewan tried their luck at gold panning,

¹Born in Missouri in 1829.



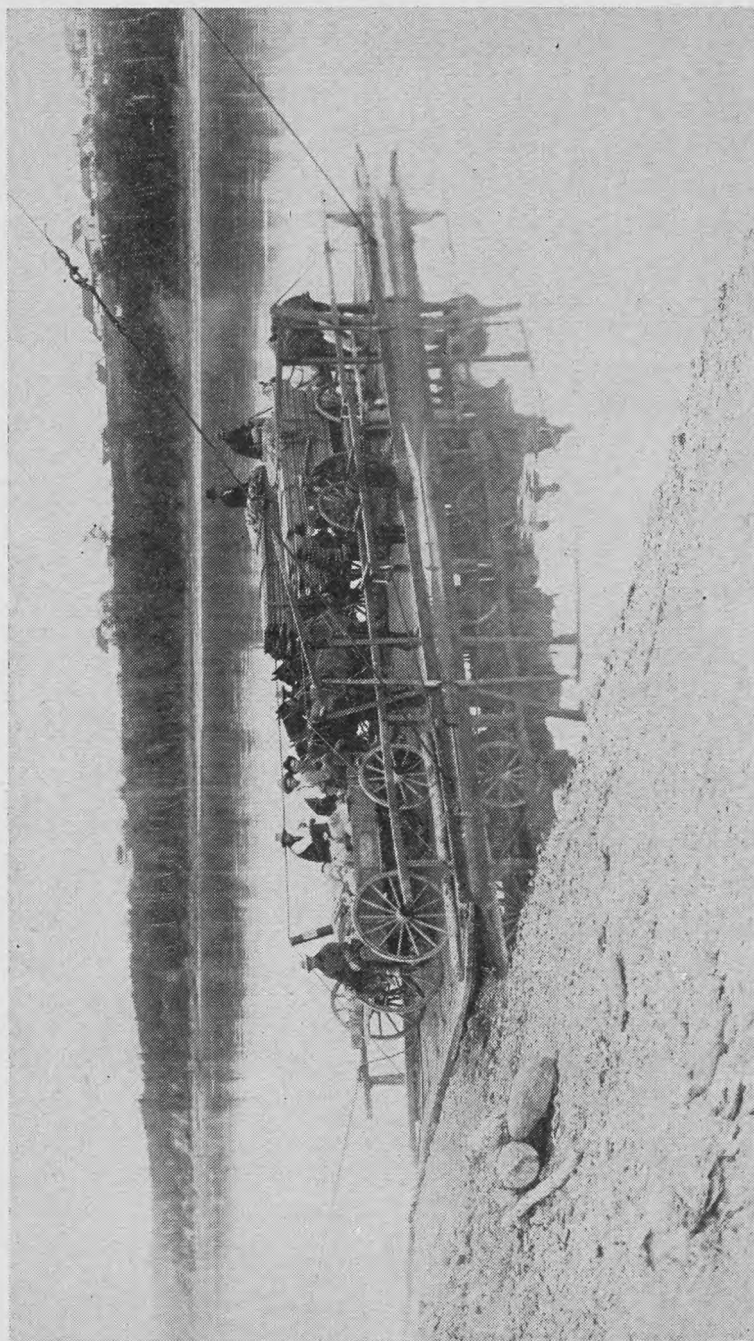
Copyright, Ernest Brown Collection

Gold Panning in the Saskatchewan, Using a Hand-made "Grizzly," 1890

including Tom Tims and Jim Dandy, two old gold washers who lived in a couple of miners' shacks near the south end of the ferry. Gold sold at \$16 an ounce, and a hard day's work would average between \$2 and \$6, enough to buy groceries. Some lucky ones would occasionally make \$10 or \$12 in one day:¹ one season's work by the gold panners would produce about \$8,000 all told. Many of the nuggets of gold were sold to the local merchants, all of whom in the old days had scales. When nuggets were brought in for sale it was customary for the purchaser to split open each one to make sure that a nut or bolt had not been added to make weight. Most of the gold panning had finished by the end of the first decade of the new century, but at the beginning of the depression in the 'thirties a few men who were out of work and had nothing else to do went back to gold panning to try and eke out a living. They made a dollar or two a day, which was a bare subsistence. The only place at this time that was any good at all for gold panning was from about three miles upstream down to the island.

Transport between Lamoureux and the Fort before the building of the C.N.R. bridge in 1905 was provided by means of a ferry. Originally, in 1874, Joseph and Francois Lamoureux had a small boat in which they took travellers across the river. By 1882 plans were made to have a cable and regular ferry. The cable broke in 1886 and it was some time before the ferry was back in service. On April 24th, 1888, an old scow up the river broke loose and caused such damage to the ferry and cable that a new ferry had to be built. The new ferry remained in service until April 27th, 1894, when it sank with a load of bricks, lumber, and 10 horses. Yet another ferry was

¹In W. F. Butler's report of 1871 he says: "In the neighbourhood of Edmonton from three to twelve dollars of gold have frequently been 'washed' in a single day by one man." (Cited in A. O. MacRae; *op. cit.*, p.226).



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The Ferry at Fort Saskatchewan, about 1898

built, and this continued in operation until 1905 when the bridge was constructed and the ferry service discontinued. The ferry used to cross the river slightly downstream from the old bridge.

As the settlements became established the first stores and hotels were opened. On the north side of the river Philip Heiminck had bought J. Halpenny's claim in November, 1881. Heiminck already had a store in Edmonton, and it was reported in the *Edmonton Bulletin* for November 26th, 1881, that he was fixing up Halpenny's old place, intending to open a branch store there shortly. He first advertised this store (selling dry goods, groceries, hardware, etc.) in the *Edmonton Bulletin* for February 11th, 1882. However, before the year was out he had changed the name of the location of his branch store from 'Fort Saskatchewan' to 'City of Saskatchewan'! Philip Heiminck also went into the hotel business that year, and in the *Edmonton Bulletin* for November 18th, 1882, he was advertising the "Palace Hotel, City of Saskatchewan."¹ In March, 1893, Xavier St. Jean bought the hotel, renovated it and planned to name it the Ethel Hotel, but it went under the name of the Saskatchewan Hotel and was rented to Theophile Lamoureux.

On the south side James Haly & Co. were advertising a dry goods and grocery store with "Highest Cash Price paid for Fur" in the January 24th, 1881, issue of the *Edmonton Bulletin*. James Haly thus became the first merchant on record in Fort Saskatchewan. The following year McNichol & Chamberlayne (General Merchants) evidently bought out James Haly & Co., for in the *Edmonton Bulletin* for November 4th, 1882, they were advertising their store in Fort Saskatchewan — "Re-

¹This old log hotel is probably the oldest building in existence in the district, and may still be seen on the north bank of the river between the school and the home of Roland Lamoureux.



Government Street (101 St.), 1898
The Presbyterian Church is on the extreme right.

Copyright, Ernest Brown Collection

member the place, Haly's old store east of the fort." In November, 1887, A. Lang was reported building a bakery in the settlement which would supply the police with bread. A new hotel, the Mansion House, was opened in July, 1894, on the south-east corner opposite the entrance gates to the present Provincial Gaol. In 1892 there were only some dozen or so houses in Fort Saskatchewan, though many new ones were to be constructed within the next few years. In 1892, also, there was a small livery barn in existence¹ on the site of the present Texaco service station on 100 Ave. at 102 St. Thus, with all these improvements and developments, and with the growth of population throughout the decade, the settlement of Fort Saskatchewan was able to become established as a Village on March 15th, 1898.

¹This had been opened by W. H. ("Nobby") White, who was later a Liberal M.P. for many years. A cairn at Bruderheim commemorates his death there while campaigning for re-election. The plaque reads:

In Memory of
W. H. White
Who died at Bruderheim
June 11th, 1930.
He served us well.

Chapter 6

1900-1909: THE BEGINNINGS OF METHODISM IN THE FORT AND DISTRICT

The Methodist Church has a long and honoured history in Alberta, dating back to Robert Terrill Rundle, who made his home in Edmonton from 1840 to 1848. He was the first settled missionary of any church in the entire area west of the Red River settlement, coming under the auspices of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society of England. At that time Edmonton was the most distant foreign mission outpost of the Wesleys. In 1847 Rundle supervised the establishment of the first Protestant mission in the west at Pigeon Lake by Benjamin Sinclair, a half-breed lay preacher, teacher and farmer from Norway House. In 1857 Rev. Henry Bird Steinhauer, an Ojibway Indian, opened a new site at Whitefish Lake. Rev. George McDougall was appointed Superintendent of the Saskatchewan District in 1860, stationed at Norway House, and two years later, with his son John McDougall, made his first trip west. They were successful in securing the founding of a mission on the north bank of the Saskatchewan by the spring of 1863. This was named Victoria (now Pakan), and the same year George McDougall moved with his family to this new mission where he resided until 1871, when he moved to Edmonton to found a permanent mission. The old McDougall Church was completed by 1873, and came to serve both the Indian and white population. An advertisement in the Edmonton Bulletin for December 3rd, 1881, reads: "Rev. John McDougall will preach in Cree in the Methodist church at half-past ten in the morning, and in English at seven in the evening on Sunday."

As far as Fort Saskatchewan was concerned, students did not come into the area until close to the end of the

century. Before students were appointed to the district, however, there is record of Rev. Arthur Whiteside, stationed at Beaver Creek from April 15th, 1896, to June 3rd, 1897, whose preaching circuit stretched from Agricola to the east side of Beaver Lake. Every second Sunday he preached at Agricola in the morning and Josephburg in the afternoon; from Josephburg he went to Beaver Creek in the evening one fortnight and Deep Creek the next. A typical entry in his daily diary reads: "Sabbath May 31st, 1896. Weather fine and pleasant. Preached at Agricola. Text John 20:31. Also at Josephberg and at Deep Creek, having supper at Mrs. Kelley's. A nice number was out to service. Same text. Went home after service."¹ Two weeks previously the diary records some of the trials and tribulations of a pioneer preacher: "Sabbath May 17th, 1896. Weather somewhat cloudy and raw. Only a very few attended the Qtly service at Agricola. Preached from John 1:17 & held Sacrament. Went to Josephberg in afternoon & did the service. Received into full membership Robert Hare. Went to Beaver Creek, the road being bad deterred my speed but I rode on till I came to the Creek about 3 miles this side of the Sch. House when I found the bridge gone & the water in rapid flow. Thinking I might wade through all right & be safe on horseback, I had no sooner stepped him in when he bucked to one side and threw me off. Into the water I went and had to swim for it, with overcoat and shawl on. I found it difficult to make headway but did get to grabbing some twigs and find my feet touching bottom but on the wrong side. I saw the horse had swam across and the saddle drop off and the animal away but not too far. I got across the loose pieces of bridge composed simply of rails & soon seen some teams of Indians coming in the opposite direction

¹Courtesy Dr. W. Carleton Whiteside, Victoria, B.C.

and camping by the creek. I put saddle on horse and although everything on me was wet I mounted and on to the School House. A good congregation was gathered & were waiting. I excused myself as having some difficulty in crossing the creek and then opened service. Preached from same text and administered sacrament while my clothes were dripping. Robert H. Cormack gave me his name on trial. Got no cold! Went home walking. Wife had come with buckboard & we went riding home in it, with Judy, my mare, leading. Bathed in cold water."¹

After Rev. Arthur Whiteside's pioneer Ministry in the whole area between Fort Saskatchewan and Beaver Lake, students were appointed to the district and by 1900 to Fort Saskatchewan itself, which first appears in the official records that year. These students were appointed by the year as part of their probation before ordination (unlike the Presbyterian students who came out for the summer only). The work certainly seems to have thrived under their leadership, especially in the rural areas. At Beaver Hills, for example, Mrs. John Fluker and Mrs. Robert Hare saw the urgent need of building a church, and, together with Charles S. Laidman,² student that year, they were instrumental in securing the erection of a church in 1900. This was originally called 'Josephburg Methodist Church,'³ though 'Beaver Hills' was the name that prevailed over the years. The church was originally located 1½ miles east of Josephburg, where the recreation ground is now. In 1913 Rev. Charles H. Johnson secured a tent and some lumber and set up a preaching place two miles north of the church on land belonging to T. A. ("Doc") Fluker and combined the

¹Courtesy Dr. W. Carleton Whiteside, Victoria, B.C.

²Charles S. Laidman was the student from 1900 to 1901. He found himself a bride (Miss Walker) while he was at the Fort.

³According to the pulpit bible, donated by Mrs. John Wilson, and dated December 23rd, 1900.



The Opening and Dedication of Beaver Hills Church, 1900

two points of Deep Creek and Beaver Hills. This point was known officially as 'Fluker's Grove', and services were held there for the summer months in 1913. There was quite a bit of opposition from Beaver Hills to this move, and the new combined point did not become established. However, as time went on it became clear that the church itself should be moved to a new location further north. William H. Fluker made available¹ one acre of land about 2½ miles north of the old church site, and a few years after Church Union the building was moved to the new location.² At Church Union in 1925 Beaver Hills became part of the Fort Saskatchewan (Rural) Pastoral Charge, which merged with Fort Saskatchewan in 1943, the Minister at the Fort then serving both town and country points. However, by this time the congregation at Beaver Hills was

¹For the sum of \$1—necessary for the legal transfer of the title to the church. This land was to revert to the original property in the event of the church ceasing to exist. For the record this cheque for \$1 was never cashed!

²This took place during the early Ministry of Rev. Elmore J. Hodgins (1926-1938), probably in 1927.

beginning to dwindle rapidly, and at the annual meeting on January 6th, 1948, it was decided to discontinue services indefinitely.¹ After a period of uncertainty in which Beaver Hills retained its identity as a separate congregation and also maintained the church building, the congregation decided to unite with First United Church, Fort Saskatchewan, the members being received on June 28th, 1953. The church was sold to the Hutterite colony at Scotford, where it is still in use as a school and church. With the balance of the funds from Beaver Hills the congregation bought chimes² for the Fort Saskatchewan church, which were dedicated as the "Beaver Hills Chimes" on Sunday, June 7th, 1953, Allison Fluker taking part in the service on behalf of the Beaver Hills congregation. He said in part: "In order that the name of Beaver Hills Church may not be forgotten, and as a memorial to these early pioneers, we, the people of the Beaver Hills Church, do present these Chimes in the hope that they will mark the continuing ministry of a pioneer Church."

Thus, the work, which had been supplied intermittently for some few years before the turn of the century, was established. The first ordained Minister, Rev. Albert R. Aldridge, was appointed to the Fort Saskatchewan Mission in 1901, though he did not arrive until later in the year. The strength of Methodism lay in the surrounding country, but a group of far-sighted men from Beaver Hills and Partridge Hill saw that the cause must eventually have its centre in the town. Accordingly, in the fall of 1901, several informal meetings were held and it was agreed to build a Parsonage in the

¹In 1949 fortnightly services were recommenced, but after eight months they were again discontinued.

²The chimes consist of the amplified music of chimes and vibraharp recordings.



Government Street (101 St.), 1904

The Mansion House Hotel is to the right and the O'Brien Block on the left. The Queens Hotel is a block away, on Ross Street (102 St.).

Copyright, Ernest Brown Collection

Fort. A committee was appointed¹ and four lots on Dennis Avenue (100 Ave.) were purchased, two for the Parsonage at \$40 each, and two for the future church at \$70 apiece. For the time being the sum of \$250 was borrowed from the Merchants Bank in order to pay cash, until the loan from the Edmonton Methodist Church and Parsonage Extension Fund could be secured. A bond against such a loan of \$400 (though \$350 only was eventually advanced) was signed by the committee on October 1st, 1901, in the presence of George Sparling (student that year) as witness. Work was commenced immediately on a Parsonage 18 ft. by 26 ft., the kitchen part being 14 ft. by 26 ft. By September Rev. A. R. Aldridge had arrived, and he was able to move with his family into the kitchen part of the house in October, 1901. The front part of the house was used as a church until a church building could be erected. This Parsonage still stands, the house immediately west of First United Church, owned and occupied by G. Manz. The church was constructed in 1902, largely by volunteer labour, and remained in use for close to 45 years, until the disastrous fire of March, 1947. The new church was rebuilt on the old site, though quite a bit further back from the front of the lot. Mr. Aldridge continued to have student assistance in the Fort Saskatchewan Mission, especially to help with the week-end preaching in the country. For example, John Tough came out each week-end during the winter of 1903-1904 from Edmonton where he was in college. He tells of one experience that occurred at Riverside. He arrived Saturday for the week-end's appointments, and went for a walk down by the river. He noticed a bear come out of the bush on the opposite bank, sniff at a

¹Thomas Henry Attewell, Robert Hare, and Robert Houston as secretary-treasurer.

carcase, and then plunge into the river to swim across. The current carried him downstream, and so he took little notice of the incident. On Sunday morning he again went to the same spot by the river, and this time saw a cub come out of the bush, sniff at the carcase, and it also swam across. He went back to Percy Williams' farm, where he had been staying and where service was to be held, and reported what he had seen. Immediately the men decided to go on safari—despite the fact that it was time for service. "Nobby" White, who owned the neighbouring farm, went off for his gun, while Percy Williams and his hired man went upstairs for their guns. Suddenly there was a loud report, and a bullet ploughed through the bedroom floor and embedded itself in the banisters, just a few inches from where the young student-Minister was standing. The embarrassment of all concerned was acute, but there is no record as to whether the men came to church to make atonement or not.

In the meantime, the Presbyterian Church under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Forbes was growing from strength to strength. The division of the field at the end of April, 1901, left Mr. Forbes free to concentrate on the work south of the river, and before very long another church was being erected, this time at Partridge Hill, this church being opened on May 17th, 1903. The Partridge Hill district was becoming well established by this time. There were only a few settlers¹ in the area before the group from Ontario known as the "Parry Sound Colony" arrived in 1892, and settled in the Beaver Hills and Partridge Hill districts. A few years after their arrival the Partridge Hill school was built, and it was used for Sunday services by three denominations—Methodist, Presbyterian, and Anglican. The new Presbyterian Church

¹e.g., John Whitson and Robert Houston from North Dakota.

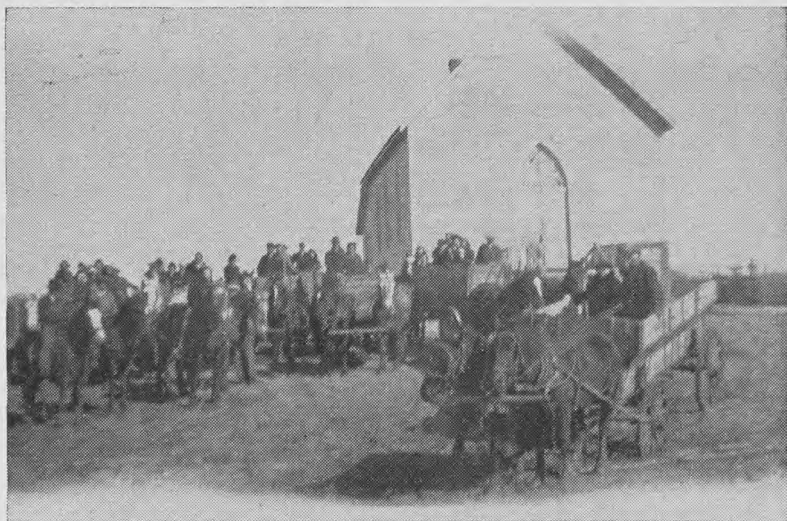


Photo Courtesy Mrs. J. W. Attewell

Partridge Hill United Church, 1943



Photo by Dr. W. A. Johnstone

Partridge Hill United Church, 1957

was now used jointly by the Methodists and the Presbyterians. In Fort Saskatchewan itself permission to form a Session was granted by Presbytery at its meeting in February, 1902. John Asher and William Truslove were elected Elders on May 11th and inducted after the service on May 25th. The next day, May 26th, 1902, the first meeting of the first Session of the Presbyterian Church was held. John Asher was appointed Clerk of Session, and the Communion roll reviewed, showing a membership of 29. Before long William Truslove had fallen sick and was ill for a long time, eventually leaving the district. As a result no Session meetings were held between June 29th, 1903, and April 9th, 1907, when the new Session held its first meeting, the Elders being John Asher, John Paul, and Roy Walton. At this meeting John Asher resigned as Clerk of Session, and was replaced by John Paul, who remained in office until 1920. The earliest Presbyterian communion roll extant dates from October, 1907, when the original roll was "severely purged." At this date there were 66 members and seven associate members. At the fall meeting of Presbytery in 1903 the Mission at Fort Saskatchewan was raised to the augmented stage,¹ and, on February 16th, 1904, Rev. A. Forbes was officially called by the congregations of Fort Saskatchewan, Agricola and Partridge Hill, and duly inducted in the Fort Church by Rev. D. G. McQueen.

In 1908 Mr. and Mrs. Forbes planned a trip back to Scotland, proposing to leave on June 1st and to be absent about five months. They had so endeared themselves to the community that the people of the Fort presented them with a sum of money for this trip, to indicate their deep appreciation of them and their work

¹i.e. the congregation had attained sufficient financial strength to be permitted to call their own Minister, the income being 'augmented' by the Home Mission Committee.

in the district. Soon after his return, Mr. Forbes began holding services at the barracks every second Sunday. In the summer of 1909 there was a great movement of settlers going into the country north and west of Edmonton. The Peace River country was attracting quite a number of people, and the Presbyterian Church felt that something should be done to meet their spiritual needs. Accordingly, the Presbytery asked Mr. Forbes, the Home Missions Convenor, to go and look over the district, both as to the settlement of the country and the need of appointing a Minister to that area. The Session at the Fort agreed to release Mr. Forbes for about two months, and on August 10th, 1909, Mr. and Mrs. Forbes set off on their long journey. They started with a span of ponies and a buckboard piled high with food, bedding and a tent. The journey was extremely difficult, and more than once Mrs. Forbes had to get out so that the ponies could draw the buckboard out of the mud. Indeed, on one occasion they even had to unload it before it could be moved. After a thorough investigation of the conditions they began the return journey, which was as hard and eventful as the trip there. Every Sunday, as opportunity offered, Mr. Forbes gathered the few settlers together for service at their halting places. The roads were as bad as ever. At one difficult point he was told: "Mr. Forbes, you'll never get through with that small light outfit, the road is so rough and stumpy, and there is a forest fire raging 50 miles ahead of you." They listened in silence. At length Mrs. Forbes said in her bright cheery manner, "Oh yes, we'll get through. We're Scotch, you know." And they did. They arrived back in the Fort in October, having been away over two months and having travelled 1,300 miles, 300 by water and 1,000 by team. Mr. Forbes' report to Presbytery was graphic and made a deep impression upon all who heard it. The whole

Presbytery was made to feel the absolute necessity of sending out a missionary at once, and after due consideration it was Mr. Forbes himself who was asked to be the first missionary to this great new country. After much thought, their reply was, "We are ready to go." This was a stunning blow to the Session and congregation at the Fort, for they were very loth to break a pastoral relationship of over 15 years. The church was just becoming self-supporting after receiving missionary grants since Mr. Forbes' arrival in December, 1894. However, the general feeling that prevailed was that, if this was a call from God, then they would not and could not stand in the way. It was also a great wrench for the Forbes' to leave the fort after 15 years earnest, prayerful work, which had resulted in a Church and Manse free of debt and a sincere and loyal congregation. The people of the district gathered round the Manse to bid them farewell. As Mrs. Forbes was standing in the door of the caboose, a little boy rushed up with his beautiful little collie puppy, saying, "Here, Mrs. Forbes, take my puppy, he will be company for you when you're lonely." Thus, on February 21st, 1910, they started again on their long journey. The first night spent in the caboose the temperature dropped to 40 below zero. Cooking was particularly difficult in the bumpy caboose going over the rough roads. One day, while she was taking a rice pudding out of the oven, the caboose gave a great jolt and Mrs. Forbes was thrown **into** the pudding. At Athabasca Landing they began a journey of 400 miles on ice, which at least was smoother riding. The journey from the Fort to Grande Prairie took them 73 days. Mr. Forbes tried to secure a small piece of land without homesteading, but was unable to do so. Thus he filed on a quarter-section of land adjoining the present city of Grande Prairie, and moved to this claim in the spring of 1911. Mrs. Forbes again began to minister to the sick and care for the lonely, but

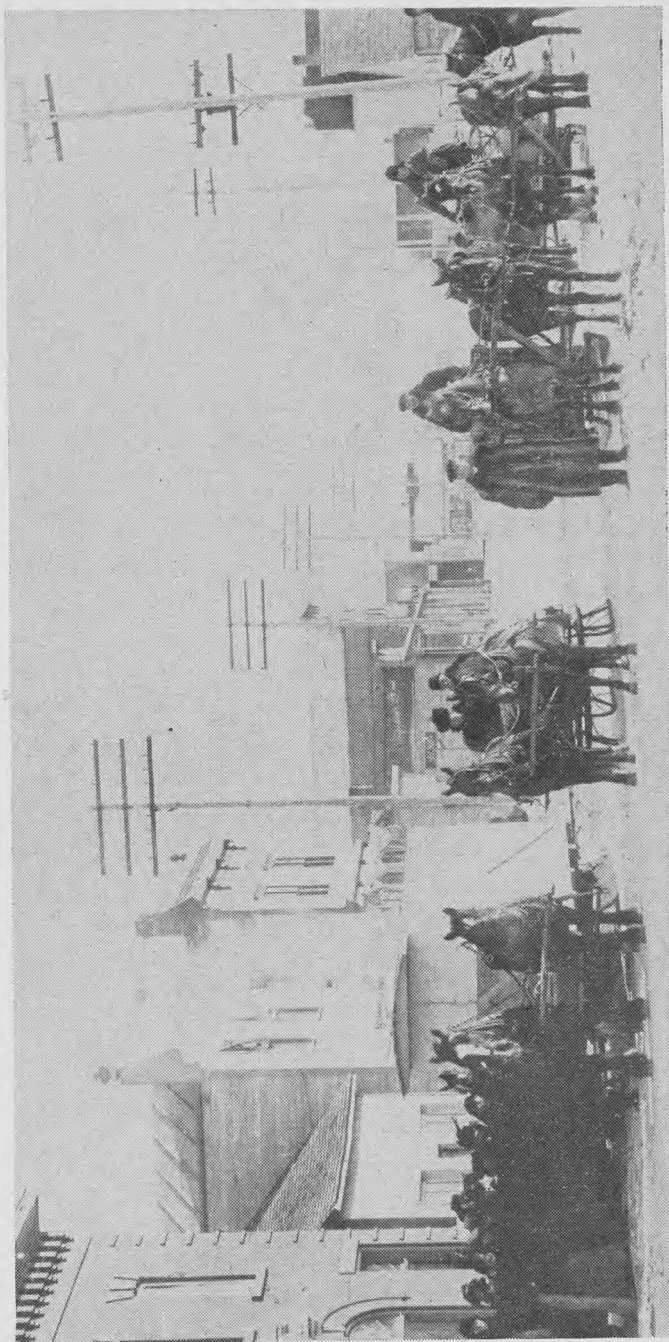


Photo Courtesy L. D. Jones

**Rev. A. Forbes and Party Leaving for Grande Prairie,
February 21st, 1910**

The photo is taken on Government Street (101 St.) with the Mansion House Hotel just visible on the left. The caboose is on the left, and Mr. and Mrs. Forbes are seated in the cutter in the centre.



Rev. A. Forbes in the Door of the Caboose, which Became the First Hospital in Grande Prairie

she was beginning to find the work too great for her physical powers and she appealed for a nurse to come and take on this work. Miss Baird responded and left Edmonton on October 2nd, 1910. Mrs. Forbes, however, was indefatigable in her work, supporting her husband and initiating some new undertakings herself. She pushed herself to the limit—and beyond. During the war she was deeply concerned with those who went overseas and was constantly in contact with them, always sending something to comfort and cheer. However, she herself was not destined to see peace restored to the world. On August 27th, 1917, she passed to her rich reward. Rev. William Simons, Home Mission Superintendent, said: "The scene at her funeral which was conducted by Rev. Dr. McQueen of Edmonton and other Presbyterian and Anglican clergymen, was touching beyond power of expression. Every place of business was closed and blinds drawn during the afternoon. The procession would have filled the Church three times

over, comprising Protestant and Catholic, white man and half breed, people who had left their harvesting and driven 30 miles to pay their last respects to one who had been a mother to the community. 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.'"¹ A tablet was erected by the Fort Saskatchewan congregation in their church² and it took the form of a brass shield mounted on oak, with the following inscription:

AGNES SORREL FORBES

To the Glory of God and in Memory of

Agnes Sorrel Forbes,

Beloved wife of Rev. A. Forbes, D.D.,

Who departed this life August 27th, 1917.

Fort Saskatchewan, 1895-1909

Grande Prairie, 1910-1917.

The unveiling service was held on Sunday, February 16th, 1919, with Dr. A. Forbes and Dr. D. G. McQueen present.

In the first decade of the new century the Roman Catholic Church was looking towards the south bank of the river with a view to establishing work in Fort Saskatchewan itself, and the initiative was finally taken by the Franciscan Fathers. The first Franciscans to be despatched to the west were Father Berchmans and two lay-brothers, Raphael and Andrew, who arrived at Lamoureux on April 11th, 1908. At that time it was anticipated that Fort Saskatchewan, a growing and bustling town, would become the centre of their activities in the west. On March 16th, shortly before their

¹Quoted in *Agnes Sorrel Forbes—A Memoir*, by Janet Bremner, p.29.

²This tablet was unfortunately destroyed in the fire of 1947, when the United Church was burned to the ground.

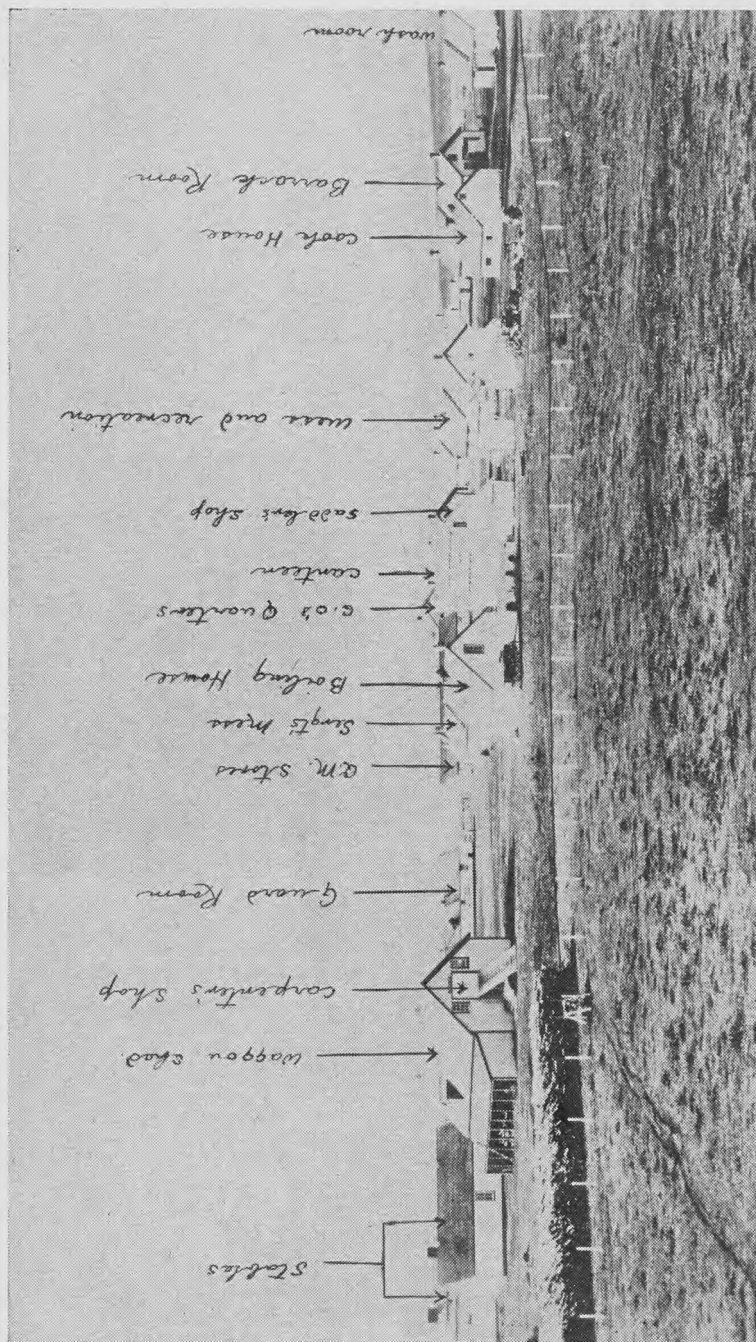


Photo Courtesy R.C.M.P., Regina

'G' Division Barracks from the North-East

arrival, the parish priest at Lamoureux, Father Dorais, had died unexpectedly, and the Franciscans were asked to take charge of the parish until a replacement could be found. They remained in Lamoureux for 18 months until Father M. Pilon took charge on October 4th, 1909. They began their work in Fort Saskatchewan very soon after their arrival. On May 3rd, 1908, the first Mass was said in Tom O'Sullivan's residence by Father Arthur, who had just arrived in the west. A restaurant was rented from N. Millette, and this was transformed into a temporary chapel which was inaugurated by Father Arthur on May 13th, 1908, and dedicated to "Our Lady of the Angels," this being the first Franciscan mission in Alberta. The Franciscans were already looking towards the building of a church, and Archbishop E. J. Legal put at their disposal several lots well south of the C.N.R. tracks. However, it was felt that this land was too far from the centre of the town, and so a petition was sent to the Government for a grant of one acre of land on the mounted police reserve, which they were able to secure on June 3rd, 1909. Father Simon had arrived at the mission in the fall of 1908 and Father Boniface on April 16th, 1909, and under their leadership work was begun on the newly-acquired property of a fine \$10,000 church. Stones and gravel necessary for the foundation of the new structure were hauled from the bed of the Saskatchewan, and by Christmas, 1909, work was far enough advanced that the first Mass could be held in the new church, which still stands by the main entrance to the Provincial Gaol. Before very long it became clear to the Franciscans that Fort Saskatchewan was not the logical place to establish the centre of their work, and instead North Edmonton was developed for this purpose, the present chapel and monastery being built there in 1911. Fort Saskatchewan thus continued to be served by the

Franciscan Fathers from North Edmonton until 1950, when Father R. Berube of Lamoureux was appointed to succeed them.

At the beginning of the century the Village of Fort Saskatchewan was progressing by leaps and bounds, and an unbounded optimism began to grip the people. The first paper was printed in 1903, published by W. J. Hunter, who had left the Edmonton Bulletin in order to establish the new paper. The first issue of 'The Reporter' is dated May 7th, 1903, and bears the inscription "Vol. 1, No. 1, Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, N.W.T." It is reported that buildings were being erected at many locations and that local stores were doing a 'land-office' business. The merchants¹ were doing well, as the editorial pointed out. Mentioned in the local news column was a \$1,000 order of goods for the Barr colony at Lloydminster, and at the same time another local firm was loading a river scow with flour and potatoes for a consignee in Battleford. Fort Saskatchewan Townsite Company (manager, B. C. d'Easum) had an eye to the future, and ran a half-page advertisement in the paper suggesting that "Capitalists can do nothing

¹The local business firms at this time included the following: The flour mill owned by Shera & Co.; three general stores owned by Wilkin & Co., Kimball, and Shera & Co.; Shera & Co. also ran a butcher shop in connection with their store, flour mill and cattle ranch; two hardware stores owned by A. M. Carscadden, and W. F. Langworthy; two livery stables, the Elk owned by Ellsworth Simmons and John Whitson, and the Farmers' Feed owned by G. Steele; one drug store in operation by Dr. Aylen, and another soon to be opened by A. M. Sutherland; three doctors, Aylen, Bennett, and Donald; one lawyer, S. A. Dickson; two real-estate agents, H. E. Daniel, and B. C. d'Easum; one saddlery owned by Mr. Veitch; a bakery, fruit and confectionery business owned by R. E. Staples; the Union Bank managed by Mr. Gourley; a lumber yard run by Cushing brothers; two hotels, the Queens run by J. Larose, and the Mansion House run by J. Beauchamp; machine agencies operated by Graham and McEvoy, Eugene Clark and Andrew Underschultz; and a jeweller and watchmaker, Fred White.



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The Office of 'The Reporter,' 1904

Facing Dennis Avenue (100 Ave.) where the Brant Hotel stands now.

better than look up our town for investments," and stating the need for a cheese factory, tannery, pork packing establishment, pump factory, sash and door factory, photographer, dentist, undertaker, working shoemaker, and merchant tailor. The local school (under J. M. Morgan and Miss Pollard) was reported as "not being quite equal to the growing needs of the town," but an \$8,000 by-law for a new school had been carried shortly before. This brick school was constructed in 1904 or 1905,¹ and still stands on 104 St. The south wing was added on to the school in 1919.

In the light of such growth and expansion, Fort Saskatchewan became established as a Town on July 1st, 1904, the year before Alberta became a Province. A

¹The contractors were Bill and Jack Bowden. Fort Saskatchewan was the first town on the C.N.R. between Winnipeg and Edmonton to erect a fully-modern school.

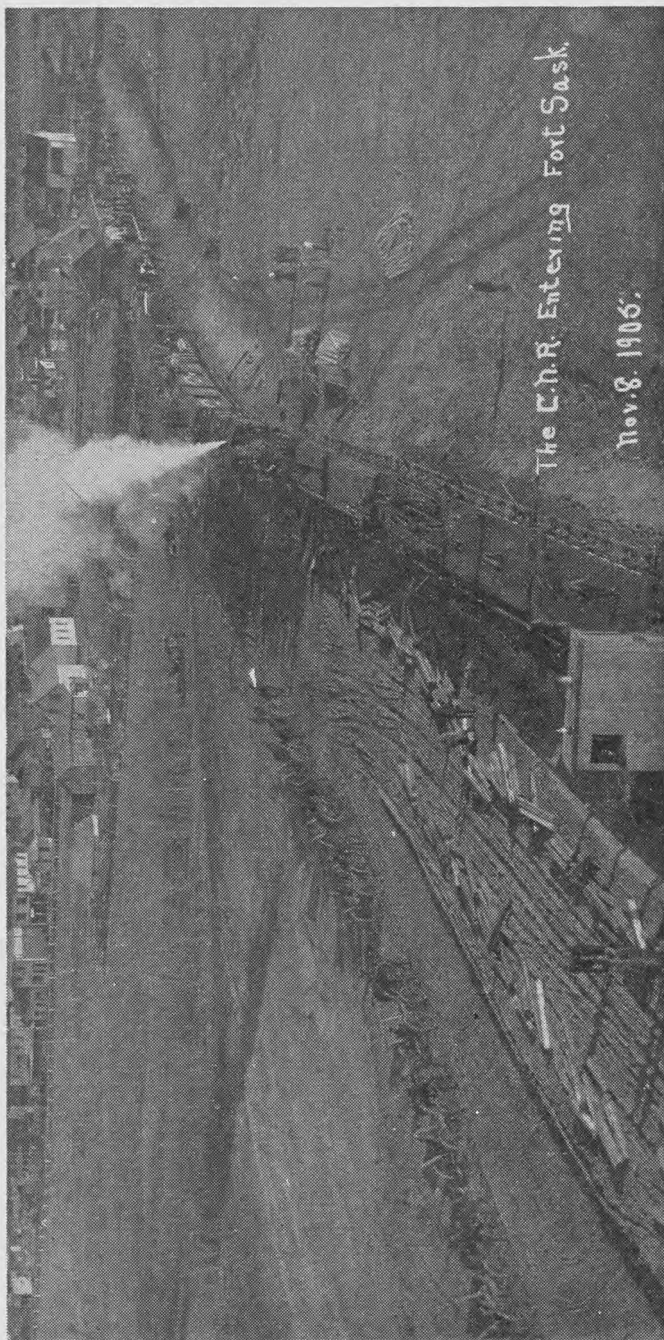


Photo Courtesy L. D. Jones

The C.N.R. Entering the Fort, 1905

The Presbyterian Church is at the top centre, with the Manse behind it. The old log church of 1887 can be seen in the left-hand corner (north-west) of the church property.



Photo Courtesy Ed. Mohr

The Building of the C.N.R. Bridge, Fort Saskatchewan, 1905

great boost came to the newly-constituted town when the Canadian Northern Railway reached the Fort from the east on November 8th, 1905, thus placing the town on a transcontinental line. Recreation, of course, was not forgotten in all this great commercial development, and a tennis club was formed in town in 1903. The first curling rink was built in 1908 on the R.N.W.M.P. reserve. Prior to this time old-timers would clear the river ice in order to get a game going.

Thus, by the end of the first decade, Fort Saskatchewan was approaching a peak period in its development, a position that was not to be recovered for 40 years.

Chapter 7

1910-1919: THE CITY OF DREAMS AND THE TOWN OF FACT

The period immediately preceding the first world war was one of unbounded optimism for the Fort Saskatchewan district. A prospectus printed at the office of the Fort Saskatchewan Herald in August, 1911, is full of thrilling opportunity for the prospective settler. Exciting fact is mixed with vivid prediction of a glorious future. Who could but fail to be attracted to the Fort when it had such a tremendous potential? Why, even a street railway system was being projected that would link Edmonton and the Fort!¹ Farmers would be attracted by the opportunities presented. The land prices in the district ran from \$10 to \$18 an acre unimproved, or from \$18 to \$45 an acre improved. The crops were magnificent. In 1910 the total amount of wheat marketed at the Fort was 462,000 bushels, the crop running as high as 58 bushels per acre. Barley ran to 525,000 bushels, the yield per acre reaching 50 bushels. The oats yield in 1910 was "phenomenal", 750,000 bushels being

¹Plans were eventually crystallised, and application was made in 1913 to the Legislature for an Act to incorporate a Company to be known as "Tramways, Limited," with power to construct lines of tramways as follows:

"(a) From a point on the boundary of the City of Edmonton northerly to or near Bon Accord in the Province of Alberta;

"(b) From a point on the last mentioned line easterly to a point in the Fort Saskatchewan Settlement;

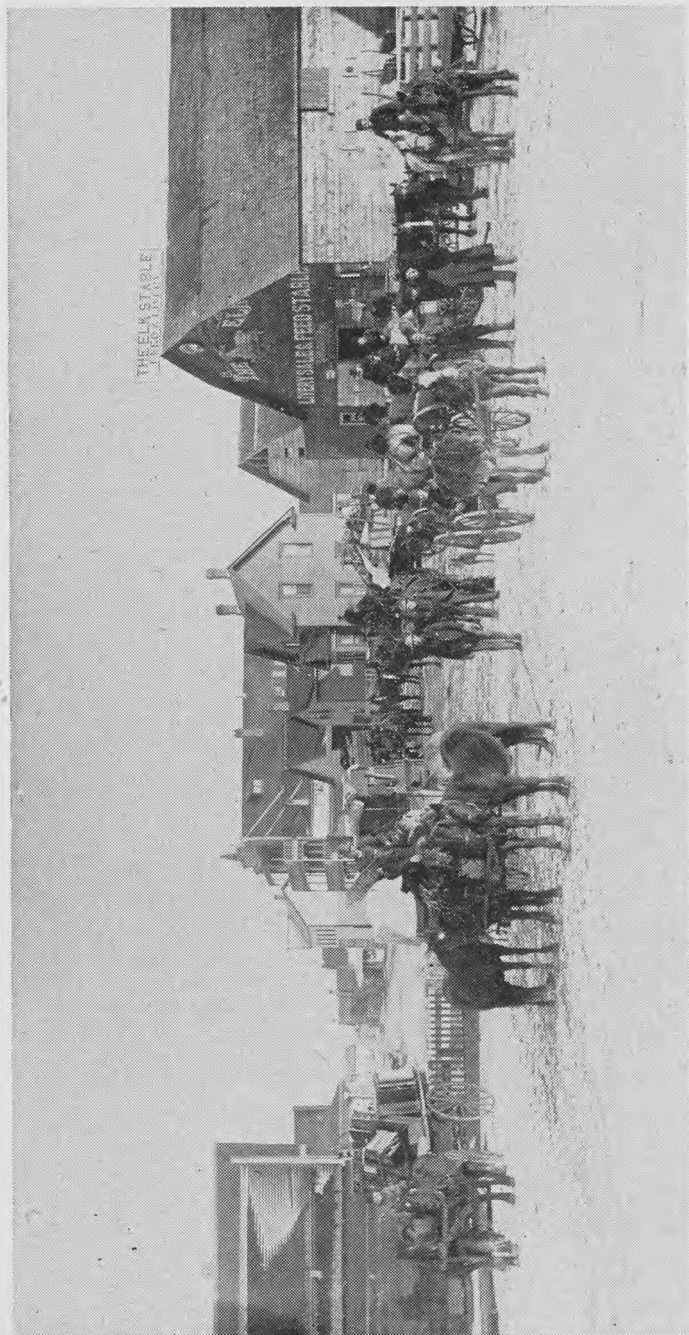
"(c) From a point on the boundary of the City of Edmonton or from a point on the firstly mentioned line north-easterly to a point in the Fort Saskatchewan Settlement;

"(d) From a point on the boundary of the City of Edmonton easterly and northerly to a point in the Fort Saskatchewan Settlement;

"Together with such branches as may be required . . ."

(The Conservator, March 27th, 1913, quoted from the Alberta Gazette, March 15th, 1913.)

Legislation for the above was assented to by the Lieutenant-Governor before the Legislature was prorogued.



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Ross Street (102 St.), 1908

The Elk Livery Stable stands on the site of the present Community Hall. The Queens Hotel was burnt in 1913, rebuilt, and is now the Fort Hotel.

marketed, an average of 50 bushels per acre, and in some cases the yield was as high as 110 bushels per acre. The cost of heating one's home was always a prime consideration, and where could you beat these prices? Coal of first-class quality, mined in several places within a few miles of the Fort, sold at the mine at from \$1.75 to \$2.25 a ton. Or, if one had no means of transportation, coal for household purposes would be delivered in the Fort at \$4.00 a ton, steam coal being much cheaper yet. And for the initial building of one's home? Very close to the Fort¹ there was a brick plant, operated by the Fort Saskatchewan Brick Company, which advertised a capacity of 35,000 bricks a day. The deposit of clay for bricks was practically inexhaustible, and the abundance of water and cheap fuel made the cost of production extremely low. There are many brick houses still in and around the Fort today dating from this period. And electricity? An up-to-date hydro-electric power plant was being constructed close by near the mouth of the Sturgeon River at the time of the publication of the prospectus. And other indications of a progressive spirit in a developing town were three grain elevators, a flour mill, a saw mill, a fine opera house erected at a cost of \$8,000, a well-equipped public school with highly-qualified teachers, four churches, a telephone system, a fire brigade, some half-dozen fraternal societies, and all the sports facilities wished for (right down to cricket!). The oldest and largest single day's athletic meeting in Alberta was held annually on May 24th, and in 1910 over 7,000 people attended, with \$2,000 being given away in prize money. Old newspaper files trace the sports back to 1895, though 'old timers' claimed that it was observed at a much earlier date. Indeed, it is thought

¹About half a mile south of the cemetery, on the east side of the road.



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Fort Saskatchewan Sports, May 24th, 1908

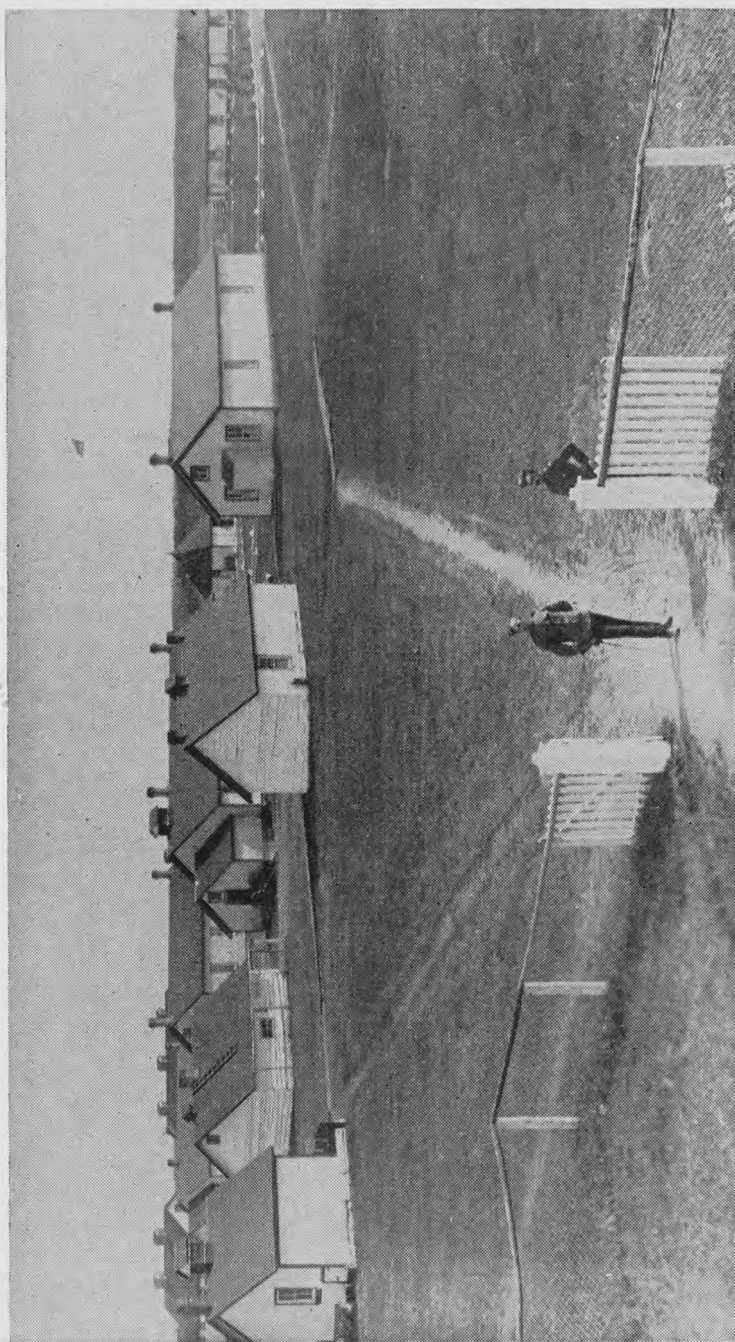


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Fort Saskatchewan Sports—R.N.W.M.P. Parade, May 24th, 1910

that the sports first took place soon after the police post was established in 1875. May 24th was certainly a great and gay day for many, many years, with special excursion trips from Edmonton by train and river steamer. May 24th, 1914, was a day of near disaster for one of the river steamers, for the "City of Edmonton" with 350 passengers on board grounded on a sandbar above Fort Saskatchewan. However, the excursionists were rescued by another steamer, the "City of Strathcona". 'Old timers' of this period could afford to sniff a little at the track events of May 24th, for they would think back upon the days when the feature race was run from the Alberta Hotel in Edmonton to the local grandstand. And as the runners caught their breath they would have a fling at the remaining track events! May 24th has been celebrated in this way throughout the years, the first change being made in 1957 when the day was altered to July 3rd. However, in 1911 the spirit of the town was truly one of gaiety and optimism. With its 49 flourishing business concerns, its first-class hotels, and its many beautiful residences, Fort Saskatchewan was well and truly on the map. The total population was about 1,000, and the property assessment stood at \$639,095.

As if this was not attraction enough for new settlers, the future was something to dream about. The projected interurban street railway would turn the Fort into a residential town for many Edmonton people, and in time it would become a popular summer resort. On April 13th, 1911, the Fort Saskatchewan Herald reported "on good authority" that Sir William Mackenzie, president and co-founder of the Canadian Northern Railway, had recently made the statement in Ottawa that "within five years Fort Saskatchewan would have a population of 10,000 souls." The Herald went on to defend the statement by presenting the case for a Fort



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Part of 'G' Division Barracks, 1902 or 1903
Sergt.-Major Emery (with cane) and Sergt. McGillicuddy

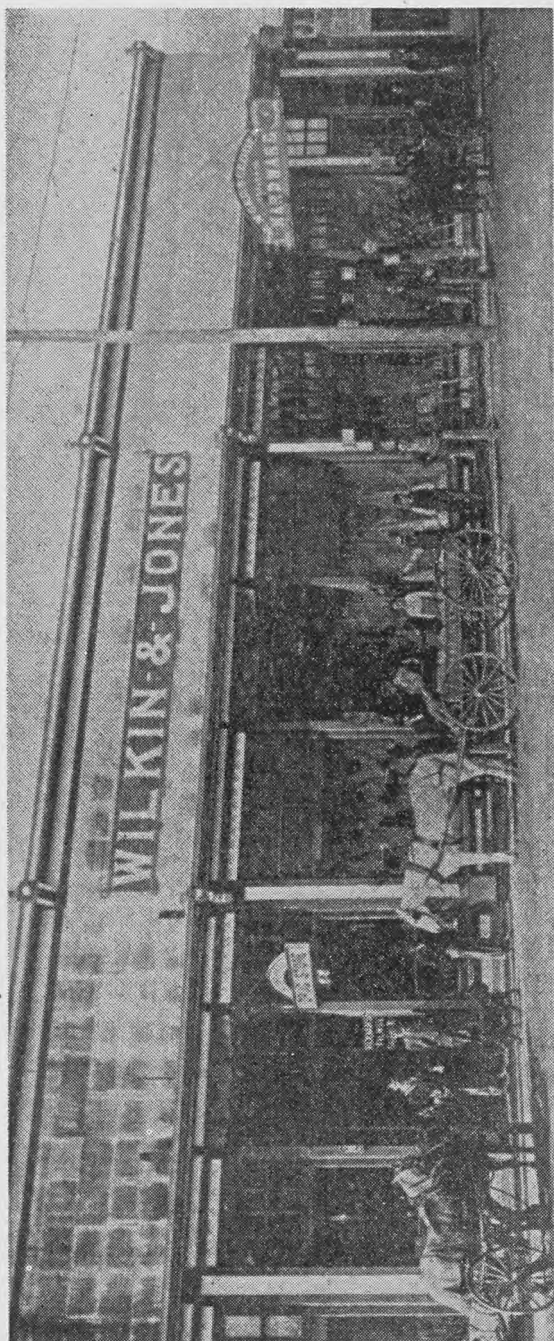
Saskatchewan-St. Albert connection for the C.N.R. main line, with Edmonton on a branch line. This would save 18 miles over the Grand Trunk Pacific's competing route, and so would cut their time schedule and operating expenses in a day of keen competition with other lines. In this case, Fort Saskatchewan, the paper felt, was destined to become a divisional point on the C.N.R. Further, with the projected lines to the Peace River and to Calgary (via Strathcona), and with the main line west all converging at the Fort, it would surely become a great freight distributing and transfer point. The repair shops alone would provide employment for over 300 skilled men.

But alas for the dreams! Somehow the projects never materialised, and several events took place which radically affected the well-being of this potential city. First of all, tragedy hit the hydro-electric plant. This plant had been constructed not only to meet the requirements of the town but also to leave a surplus for the use of manufacturers who were to be attracted to the town by cheap power and desirable sites. \$80,000 was sunk into this great project, and \$80,000 was well and truly drowned with it. The plant was completed before the end of 1911, but time was needed to build up a head of water. A leak had been noticed and it was investigated in January, 1912, Mayor Sutherland himself visiting the plant on January 16th. It was reported to the Council that the leak was not serious and had not increased since the fall, but that it would need watching in the spring. In due course the spring break-up came, and with it the break-up of all the town's highest hopes. A seething, turbulent mass of water swept away the whole installation and with it all hopes for the future. It was discovered later that there had been faulty construction of the flume, the water undermined it, and it collapsed. The power had

scarcely been turned on when the tragedy occurred, leaving \$80,000 worth of equipment and construction settling into the mud at the bottom of the Sturgeon, and leaving also a huge debt that was not paid off finally until 1932. The remains of the dam, which made a fine swimming pool for many years, may still be seen.

On January 21st, 1913, disaster struck the town again. A large portion of the business section was swept by fire that apparently originated in the Queens Hotel and leaped across the street to continue its work of destruction. There was trouble getting the old 'one-lung' fire engine to start, and by then the hose had frozen up. By the time the equipment was working the fire was blazing furiously and little could be done to save the buildings. S. O. Jones, the fire chief, was in Edmonton at the time. An urgent phone call sent him speeding in a taxi to the C.N. station, where, fortunately, a train was about to leave for the Fort. However, a policeman at Jasper and 101 St. saw the taxi careering down Jasper Avenue, breaking all speed records, and raced out into the middle of the street with his arms waving. The taxi swerved past him, down 101 St., and to the station, where another policeman awaited him, having been contacted by phone by the outraged arm of the law at the city's centre. The subsequent court case was dismissed when it was discovered that S. O. Jones was the fire chief at Fort Saskatchewan, and he was told that as such he could drive as fast as he liked in Edmonton. Five business places were completely gutted in the fire,¹ the loss there alone being \$24,000. One of the stores involved was a liquor store, which led to all kinds of possibilities—that came to pass! However, the same spring, with faith still in the future of the town, the construction of \$69,500 worth of new

¹G. B. Taylor, Jeweller; A. M. Carscadden, Hardware; Jones, Graham & O'Brien, General Store; A. M. Sutherland, Drugs; and a Liquor Store.



The Stores Gutted in the Fire of 1913

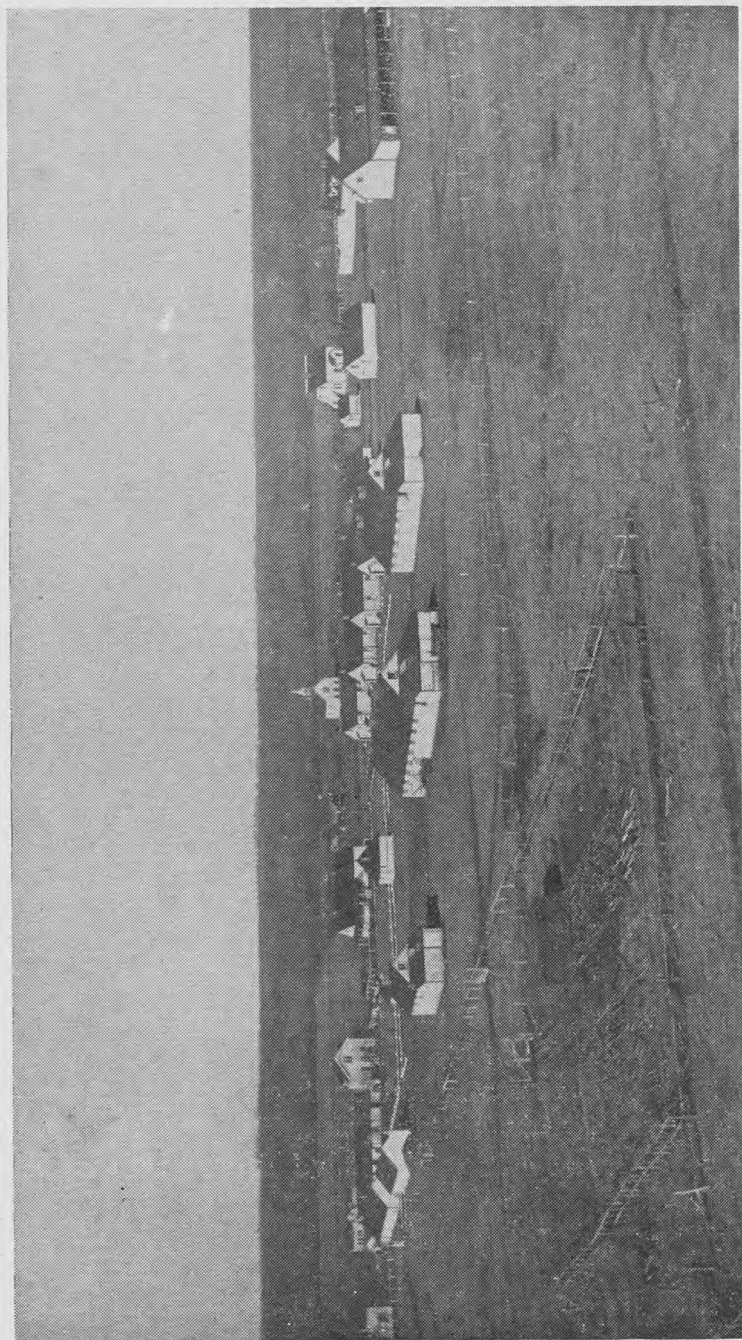
Left to right: Liquor Store; A. M. Sutherland, Drugs; Jones, Graham & O'Brien, General Store; A. M. Carscadden, Hardware; G. B. Taylor, Jeweller. These stores were on the site of the present Williamson Block, and the photo was taken about 1911.

buildings¹ was started, to replace those damaged or destroyed in the fire. The new town paper, "The Conservator,"² in the editorial of its first issue on Thursday, March 27th, 1913, reflected this hope in the future when it stated: "A town with such backing must succeed."

However, by 1913 the peak of optimism was passing rapidly. On May 1st the *Conservator* quoted "Le Courier de l'Ouest" of April 24th, 1913, that M. Boivin, a Quebec manufacturer, had been very impressed with Fort Saskatchewan as a suitable location for establishing a plant, and that if he could secure certain privileges from the municipality he would begin immediately the construction of a manufacturing concern to cost about \$200,000. Unfortunately, though, the project fell through. The same year the island in the river became the scene of a business venture, when Consolidated Agencies Company undertook hauling gravel from there to Edmonton. A hydraulic hoist was installed and a railway spur built from the C.N.R. line down to the site of operations. However, the pumping equipment, which was all sent out from England, did not prove successful. It had been designed for sand and failed to operate properly with the gravel and large stones encountered on the island. They had expected, moreover, that recovery of the gold known to be present in the area would defray operating expenses, but it proved to be a forlorn hope. Further, hard times were approaching and the gravel market was poor, and the company gave up the business soon after operations began, though they did continue to work for at least two summers. One estimate was that the company lost \$75,000 in the venture. Mr. Tribilcock was the superintendent on the job and Alex. Graham operated the switch engine that

¹Including the Williamson Block and the new Queens Hotel (now the Fort Hotel).

²Editor and Proprietor, G. O. Baetz.



General View of 'G' Division Barracks, about 1905

The Lamoureux Church in the background is across the river, which cannot be seen in the picture.

Photo Courtesy L. D. Jones

hailed the loaded cars to the C.N.R. main line. At this time, also, Woodland Dairy, Ltd., had a sub-station in Fort Saskatchewan, but the Conservator reported on December 18th, 1913, that it had been closed. Further, the famous interurban street railway never did materialise as far as the Fort was concerned, though by November, 1913, the line between Edmonton and St. Albert had been connected (except for the tracks across the Grand Trunk Pacific line). Some hopes were still entertained, however, that it would reach the Fort by the following summer, but the hopes were never realized.

Yet another blow had come to the Fort when it became apparent that the days of the mounted police in Fort Saskatchewan were numbered, and that the advocates of the move to the city of Edmonton would have their way. The headquarters staff of 'G' Division was moved in November, 1909. By 1912 new barracks were being built at Edmonton and it was hoped that they would be completed by February, 1913. The 1914 report of the R.N.W.M.P. indicates that the men had been installed there by September, 1913, and only a small detachment was left at Fort Saskatchewan under the command of Inspector Sweetapple. This sub-division was closed in April, 1916, with the transfer to Regina of Inspector Wood, the officer in charge at that time. Negotiations had been taking place between Edmonton and Ottawa, with the result that in the summer of 1913 200 acres of the police reserve were transferred to the Province by the Dominion Government. A small portion of land¹ between the Roman Catholic Church and the court house was reserved for the small R.N.W.M.P. post left behind. Final arrangements for the transfer of the barracks itself were not made until March 9th, 1914, when it was turned over for use as a Provincial Gaol.

¹330 ft. frontage and 240 ft. deep.



Copyright, Ernest Brown Collection

The Old Guard Room, May 24th, 1908



Copyright, Ernest Brown Collection

The New Guard Room, May 24th, 1908

The guard room continued in use for housing prisoners until the fall of 1915, and the barracks was torn down that fall or the following spring, one of the old landmarks of Fort Saskatchewan thus passing into history. In 1927 Warden J. D. McLean had a cairn erected on the site of the guard room, made out of stones taken from its foundations, in order to commemorate the old fort.¹ Plans for erecting a gaol to cost \$200,000 were completed early in 1914. The dormitory was completed and in use the same year, the prisoners being taken back to the old cells during the day. The cell block was built in 1915 and opened that fall. The women's gaol was built a little later and opened in June, 1918, though considerable changes have been made to it since that date. The latest addition to the men's cell block was built in 1931. The first superintendent of the new Provincial Gaol was H. A. Driggs, with W. Blythe as his assistant, F. Moon as Bursar, and nine guards.² W. Blythe succeeded H. A. Driggs as superintendent in 1923, and in 1924 J. D. McLean became the Warden, a position he still holds. The present staff at the gaol consists of 52 guards and 16 matrons.

The final setback of this period came with the outbreak of war in 1914, and the enlistment of large numbers of young men from the district, many of whom

¹The plaque on the cairn reads as follows:

Unveiled 26 July, 1927

FORT SASKATCHEWAN

To commemorate the arrival at Edmonton
in October, 1874 of

"A" Troup of the north west Mounted Police
under Inspector W. D. Jarvis and

The establishment, April 1875 of their post, Fort Saskatchewan,
on the south bank of the Saskatchewan river, twenty miles east of Edmonton
Around the site of which post

The town of Fort Saskatchewan now stands.

Erected by

Warden J. D. McLean

²Martin, Moncton, McGillicuddy, Doran, Jenkins, Huddleson, Bowell, P. Moon, and Patteson.

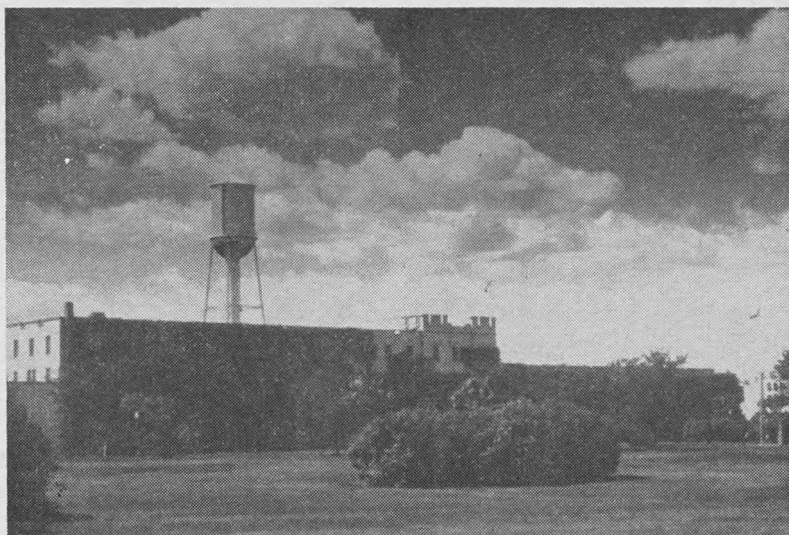


Photo by Dr. W. A. Johnstone

The Provincial Gaol, Fort Saskatchewan, 1957

did not return. The dreams of a glorious future for the Fort had by this time evaporated, and the people settled down to face stern reality. This was the age of retrenchment, consolidation, and the eking out of the dollars. Progress was slow and painful, but some progress there was.

What of the church during this decade? The Presbyterian Church had become self-supporting by the time Rev. and Mrs. A. Forbes left in February, 1910, as has been indicated. Rev. D. J. Graham was called to succeed him, and began his Ministry late in 1910¹. His early Ministry in the Fort was saddened by the protracted and painful illness of his wife. A moving letter, accompanying the presentation by her of a silver Bread Plate² to the church, was read to the Session on December 6th, 1912:

¹Most probably November—see Appendix.

²This Bread Plate is still used at Communion services in the church.

"Dear Sirs,

Will you please accept as a small token of my interest in the work of the Master in which you are engaged, this Communion Bread Plate. Trusting that you all may be spared to use it, and that it may be of service to you. It may not be mine to sit down with the Brethren again on earth around the Lord's Table, but I trust I may be counted worthy to sit down at the Celestial Banquet in the upper Sanctuary of God.

Yours in the Bonds of Christ,

Margaret Graham.

The Manse Dec. 6th 1912."

The Session was deeply moved and the following letter, dated December 7th, 1912, was sent in reply:

"Dear Mrs. Graham,

The Session wish to convey to you their appreciation of your thoughtful and kindly gift.

We were much touched by the deep interest shewn in the Church by your loving gift, while yet you are laid aside from active service, for the Master, and suffering severe bodily pain.

We accept the beautiful plate on behalf of the congregation with thanks, and shall ever remember the unselfish spirit of the giver.

We would take this opportunity of expressing our deep sympathy with you in your affliction, and pray that the Divine Presence may be ever with you, sustaining and cheering you.

And should the Good Lord in his infinite wisdom see fit that you should not sit down again at his table here on earth with his children, may the wish expressed in your letter to sit down at his table in his Kingdom be realized, and your dear husband and family, and all of us who love him, be permitted to join in that Great Feast, where there will be no more parting, no more pain, and no more sorrow.

We remain,

yours in Christ,

John Asher, Elder,

R. Walton, Elder,

John Paul, Clerk of Session."

Mrs. Graham died on August 23rd, 1913. Mr. Graham continued his Ministry for another three years, preaching at the Fort Sunday mornings and evenings. Agricola and Partridge Hill by this time were part of another Presbyterian field, which included Ardrossan and Hortonburg. Mr. Graham eventually left the Fort on October 31st, 1916. He died in Calgary on December 29th, 1940, and was buried beside his wife in the Fort Saskatchewan cemetery, being the only clergyman buried there.

In college at that time there was a young student, M. S. Kerr, who, before he had finished his course, had received a call to the Fort. Mr. Kerr writes: "After Mr. Graham left the Fort there was a long vacancy, extending to the end of the year. I believe the Moderator in the vacancy, who was the Rev. R. N. Matheson of Namao, received 30 applications for the charge. I was merely asked to fill in one Sunday, and I suppose the congregation had got so satiated with the Royal George sermons that they had heard that just out of exasperation they called a young green ignoramus, three months before he had



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The Bay Horse Livery Stable, 1906 or thereabouts

This stood on Griesbach Street (103 St.) almost opposite the present Post Office.

finished College.”¹ Mr. Kerr had planned to return to Scotland upon graduation, and this call completely changed his future. He was ordained and inducted in the Fort Saskatchewan Presbyterian Church at a special meeting of the Edmonton Presbytery held there on Thursday, April 19th, 1917, with Dr. McQueen taking the leading part in the ceremony. Within a few weeks he was called upon to officiate at his first wedding, an experience he would not forget. Later he wrote: “It was in the old Manse that I had my first marriage. I had filled out the papers in the study, and thoughtlessly had left them there when we went into the living room to perform the ceremony. With the party was a small child who started roaming round the house, eventually reaching the kitchen. Scarcely had I begun to read the

¹Letter dated March 21st, 1957.

marriage lines when I realised I had left the papers with the parties names in the study. Whatever was I to do? My first marriage and here was I going to make a muddle of it. Was my face red! Fortunately at that moment there was a loud crash in the kitchen, followed by a vociferous wailing from the same quarter. 'The child, the child,' I cried. While the parties ran to the kitchen I ran to the study and secured the papers. They all apologised to me for the unseemly interruption, but I graciously assured them I did not mind it a bit."¹ For two years Mr. Kerr remained a bachelor himself, until on Wednesday, June 25th, 1919, he was married to Margaret McLaughlin, and brought his bride to the Manse. What an experience for her! His memories of that Manse are most vivid: "What a house that old Manse was. It had 6 outside doors, and underneath it were subterranean caverns in which provisions enough to withstand a siege might be stored. For years no one had ever entered them and when I lifted one of the trap doors I involuntarily exclaimed 'This is the Black Hole of Calcutta.' There was not an ounce of plaster in the whole building which extended by gradations to what seemed like half a mile. In the one cellar that was in use there was no room to store any coal, so I carried the coal from the garage, through the pump room, through the kitchen, through the dining room, through the hallway, down the trap door into the cellar. We were so young and happy that it never occurred to us to complain."¹ In the same letter Mr. Kerr tells one other anecdote about life in the old Presbyterian Manse. "Old Timers will recall that there was only our garden between us and the Railway Station. From our windows we could see the train crossing the bridge or hear its approach from the East, consequently when preparing to travel

¹Letter dated September 25th, 1947.

we never arose till we had to. This meant racing across the garden. One day Mrs. Kerr's sister was with us and the usual race took place. My wife jumped on the train to say goodbye. Immediately the train began to move. She raced along the corridor and jumped off, right on the top of the conductor, knocking him flat on his back on the platform. The train moved on, until it was discovered that it was minus the conductor, then a halt was made to retrieve him. My wife graciously dusted him down, in a more apologetic fashion than when she dusted me down and 'All aboard' was called for the second time by the conductor who was really a good sport. Later when he would see Mrs. Kerr on the train he would back away and say 'Jump now if you want to.' " Every other Sunday Mr. Kerr preached to the prisoners in the gaol, being assisted by Mrs. Sarah Brigham, a most remarkable old lady who through rain and sunshine, storm and snow, never once failed him. On his first visit, anxious to make a good impression, he asked the prisoners to choose a hymn. Someone shouted a number. He turned the pages only to find to his utter consternation and dismay that it was "Hold the fort, for I am coming." The prisoners sang it with gusto, but it cured him for ever of asking them to choose the hymns.

The Methodist Church at the beginning of the decade was still a Mission, receiving an annual grant (never enough!) from the missionary society. However, the debt on the buildings was gradually being paid off and by 1912 Rev. E. J. Tate was able to announce to the Board¹ that the Church and Parsonage were at last clear of all debt. Rev. Charles H. Johnson began his Ministry in the summer of 1912, and found the field so organised that he preached at the Fort each Sunday

¹Quarterly Official Board held in the Parsonage on February 15th, 1912.

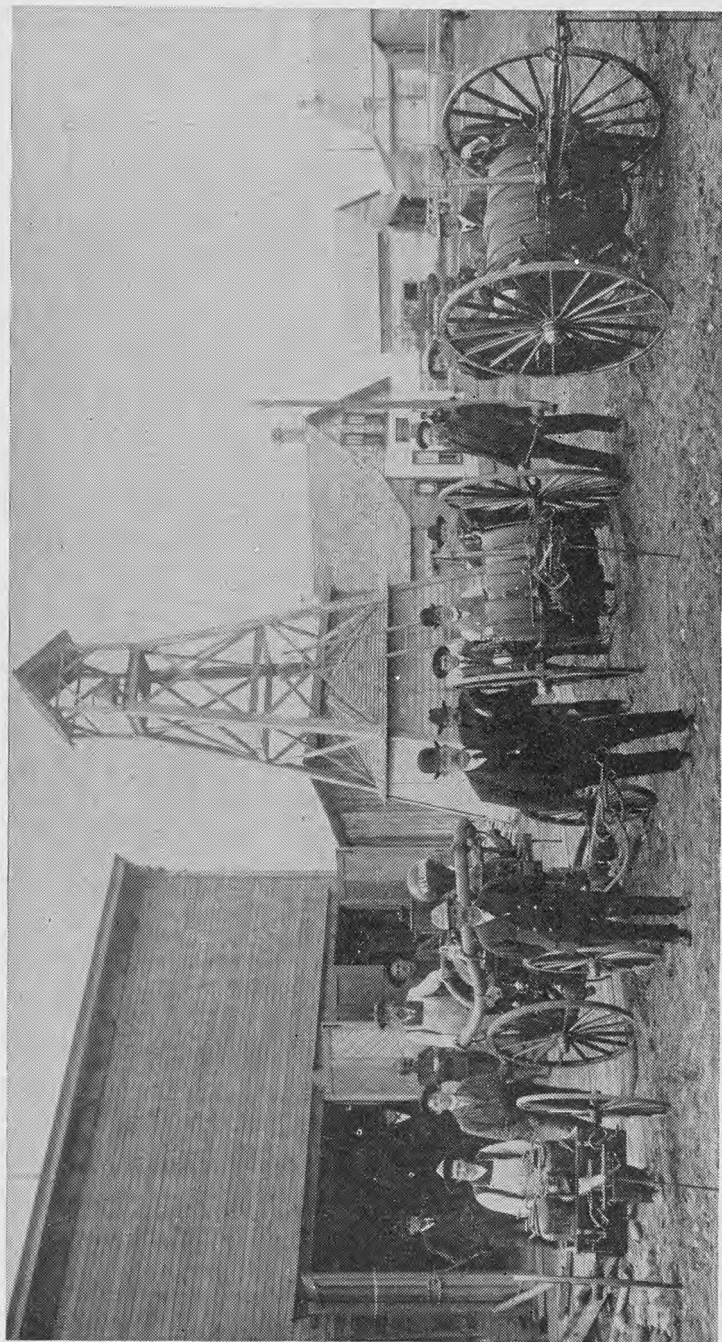


Photo Courtesy L. D. Jones

The Fire Brigade, about 1907
The Fire Hall faced Griesbach Street (103 St.) at the south end of the present Post Office and behind the Town Hall.

evening, Riverside and Deep Creek every second week, and on the intervening Sundays Beaver Hills and Partridge Hill. The need of a student assistant was almost immediately apparent, and the services of William J. Berry were secured. The following May Mr. Berry left, and Sidney Pike took his place. The Sunday schedule at this time was: Fort Saskatchewan each Sunday at 11 and 7:30, with Yorkville at 3;¹ on the fortnightly plan there was Pleasant View at 11, Partridge Hill at 3, and Fluker's Grove² at 7:30, and on the intervening Sundays Riverside at 11, Fluker's Grove at 3, and Good Hope at 7:30. The two men alternated in the Fort, and whoever preached there would walk the three miles to Yorkville in the afternoon, thus enabling only one horse to be needed for the work. Sidney Pike³ remained as a student-assistant for two years, preaching for the last time on Sunday, April 25th, 1915. In the summer of 1914 the Johnsons took their holiday at Beaver Hills in order to do a large amount of country visiting that was impossible from the Fort. The possibility of opening work further east was also explored, and as a result Bruderheim and Parkside were added to the field. At Bruderheim there were about ten English-speaking Protestant families, and Mr. Johnson usually preached at night in the Pool Hall, using the end of a table for a desk. Sometimes he slept under that table at night. Once or twice he preached in the lobby of the hotel and stayed there the night, but generally he came home after the service. With the field expanding all round it was found necessary to add a second student-assistant, and the Quarterly Official

¹Yorkville had alternated with Agricola, but Agricola was dropped earlier in the year.

²Combining Deep Creek and Beaver Hills in a tent two miles north of the Beaver Hills Church. This arrangement was for the summer of 1913 only.

³Sidney Pike found himself a bride while he was at the Fort, a Miss Agnes Buchanan.

Board formally approved of the plan on May 8th, 1914, C. B. Wilson being subsequently appointed, to reside at Bruderheim. This arrangement lasted for a year, when in the spring of 1915 it was decided by the Board "that Beaver Hills, Deep Creek, Bruderheim, Riverside be a field by itself. Weeknight services at Good Hope and Parkside." Rev. J. A. Sinclair was appointed to this field, and when Rev. George F. Driver replaced Mr. Johnson at the Fort that summer he was able to concentrate on Fort Saskatchewan, Yorkville and Partridge Hill only. Mr. Johnson writes in a letter dated October 1st, 1947, of officiating at the funeral of Joseph Turner who lived by the river. He says that he was employed by Rev. George McDougall to build a Methodist Parsonage at Edmonton, the first house to be built outside the fort there. He moved to Fort Saskatchewan, but as there was no Methodist Minister at the Fort at that time Mrs. Turner carried several of her children in turn all the way to Edmonton to be baptized.



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The Queens Hotel—"Waiting for Dinner," May 24th, 1908

New developments in the Fort Church began to take place early in the Ministry of Rev. George F. Driver (1915-1919). On October 23rd, 1915, the Trustees met and accepted an estimate of \$600 for building an extension on to the church, 49 ft. long and 20 ft. wide, with two entrances. It was also decided to install a furnace and make an excavation under the church 15 ft. wide and 7 ft. deep. To pay for these improvements a loan of \$500 was agreed upon. The first tender of \$190 for the furnace was felt to be too high, but on November 19th, 1915, an amended tender of \$175 was accepted. The formal opening of the new hall took place on Sunday, January 30th, 1916, with Rev. A. R. Aldridge, the first Methodist Minister in the Fort, as guest preacher.

Perhaps the most intriguing note of the whole decade comes from the Methodist Church. An Official Trustee Board meeting was held in the Parsonage at 7:30 p.m. on January 25th, 1916. The minutes record the following: "The matter of a canvass in the country to the farmers for subscriptions was proposed by Mr. McClellan, and it was deemed advisable to select 2 young ladies of the Church to canvass . . ."

Chapter 8

1920-1945: CHURCH UNION, DEPRESSION, AND INTEGRATION

The question of Church Union had been a live issue for a good number of years, with both ardent advocates and opponents. The Conservator, reporting the Methodist Conference of 1913, mentioned that the Conference two years before in 1911 had voted unanimously in favour of Union. On February 15th, 1912, Rev. E. J. Tate informed the Methodist Quarterly Official Board at the Fort that it was their duty to vote on the question of Church Union. The vote was taken showing four in favour, none against, and no absentions. A further vote was taken throughout the field, and the results were reported to the next Board meeting on May 6th, 1912, as follows: Official Board, 7 to 0 in favour of Union, out of 10; members, 38 to 3 in favour, out of 56; members under 18, 3 to 0 in favour, out of 4; adherents, 9 to 3 in favour. On the local scene the matter seems to have remained in abeyance for almost a decade, until Rev. M. S. Kerr of the Presbyterian Church raised the question again in 1921.¹ Rev. A. H. Rowe, at Mr. Kerr's request, brought the matter to the Methodist Quarterly Official Board on November 10th, 1921, where it received sympathetic consideration. Mr. Rowe was empowered to form a committee in the event of a proposal coming from the Presbyterian Church Board. In the Presbyterian Church the Session met on February 6th, 1922, and agreed that a vote should be taken that month by ballot on the question of Church

¹Mr. Kerr writes in a letter dated March 21st, 1957: "In regard to Church Union I may say that there was strong opposition to it in some quarters, but the blessed thing was that the Methodist Minister, Rev. A. H. Rowe and I were very good friends. We organized Prayer Meetings which met in alternate churches each week, and that I think did more good than all the arguments and debates on the matter."

Union. The result of the ballot showed 46 members in favour with 27 against, and 43 adherents in favour with 14 against. A meeting of the congregation of the Presbyterian Church was held on March 6th, 1922, and the plan for affiliated Local Union Churches¹ approved by the General Assembly in 1917, was read by Mr. Kerr. A motion was passed, with one member dissenting, "that providing suitable arrangements can be made between the Methodists and Presbyterians at Partridge Hill, we the Presbyterians at Fort Saskatchewan proceed with Union with the Methodist Church."

In the meantime the Methodist Board had met again on February 18th, 1922, and the whole question of Union with the Presbyterian Church in the Fort and a Union Church to be established at Partridge Hill was thoroughly discussed. It was felt that Partridge Hill would be the most favourable site for an experiment in Church Union, and that the majority there would be in favour. For many years there had been a Union Sunday School and also a united young people's group at Partridge Hill. Church services were held alternate weeks by the Methodists and the Presbyterians, but everyone went to all the services, the distinction being in name only. Accordingly, a deputation was appointed, with Dr. G. H. Turner as chairman, to meet with the Presbyterian congregation at Partridge Hill and discuss a Union Church at that point. At the next meeting of the Methodist Board on April 1st, it was reported that individual members of the Partridge Hill congregation had been broached and seemed favourable, but that no response had been forthcoming in the direction of

¹The plan proposed that, wherever it was desired by the people, Local Union Churches could be organized on the Basis of Union (as adopted at that time by the negotiating Churches). These Local Union Churches were to be in affiliation with one or more of the denominations then negotiating for organic Union.

arranging a meeting. It was felt, therefore, that nothing could be done until some move was made by the Presbyterians.

This stalemate continued until it became clear that Church Union would be established throughout Canada. On March 1st, 1924, the Methodist Board again appointed a committee to deal with the question of Union in the event of the Managers of the Presbyterian Church asking for a conference on the matter. Finally, Church Union was consummated throughout Canada, and on June 10th, 1925, the great inaugural service was held in Toronto, in which the three great historic denominations (Methodist, Congregational and about three-quarters of the Presbyterians) united their spiritual heritages and became constituted as the United Church of Canada.

In Fort Saskatchewan the Presbyterian congregation voted almost unanimously to enter Union, and the United Church services were held for a few years in the old Presbyterian Church, until the property was sold, when the congregation moved over to the old Methodist Church, which had remained empty during this



Photo Courtesy Mrs. J. D. McLean

The Presbyterian Church and Manse

period. At Church Union the Presbyterian Manse became the United Church Manse. At this time, also, a separate Pastoral Charge was established, to be known as Fort Saskatchewan (Rural), comprising all the country points except Patricia, which remained in association with the town church.¹ The Manse for this field was the old Methodist Parsonage in the Fort. The Ministers at Church Union were Rev. C. E. A. Pocock in the Presbyterian Church who continued at First United Church, and Rev. M. L. Wright in the Methodist Church who took charge of the Fort Saskatchewan (Rural) field.

The first congregational meeting of the United Church in Fort Saskatchewan was held in the old Presbyterian Church on Monday, June 29th, 1925, when the following officers were elected: a Session of five Elders—Dr. G. H. Turner, L. B. Augustine, T. B. McClellan, R. B. Hunter, and J. W. E. Markle; a Committee of nine Stewards—A. Stetson, E. A. Wilmeroth, E. Kelterborn, H. Walton, George Cranston, A. S. O'Brien, G. S. Lord, and A. M. Sutherland²; and a Board of three Trustees—J. B. Adamson, R. B. Hunter, and Dr. G. H. Turner.

It was not long before the question arose of vacating the old Presbyterian property by the gaol. There is extant a letter from the Provincial Government, dated May 28th, 1928, offering \$1,500 for the land and buildings, subject to the Government being able to secure also the adjacent property. The sale was made later in the year and the congregation moved over to the old Methodist Church. At the same time a house on Tofield Street (108 St.) was purchased by the United Church

¹Patricia had been connected with the Presbyterian Church in the Fort before Union. Fort Saskatchewan (Rural) originally consisted of Partridge Hill, Beaver Hills, Good Hope, Deep Creek, and Bolton, though Bolton was dropped within a year or two. Ypres Valley joined the field in 1929.

²The local paper lists only eight Stewards. Perhaps J. B. Adamson (secretary of the meeting) forgot to list his own name here.

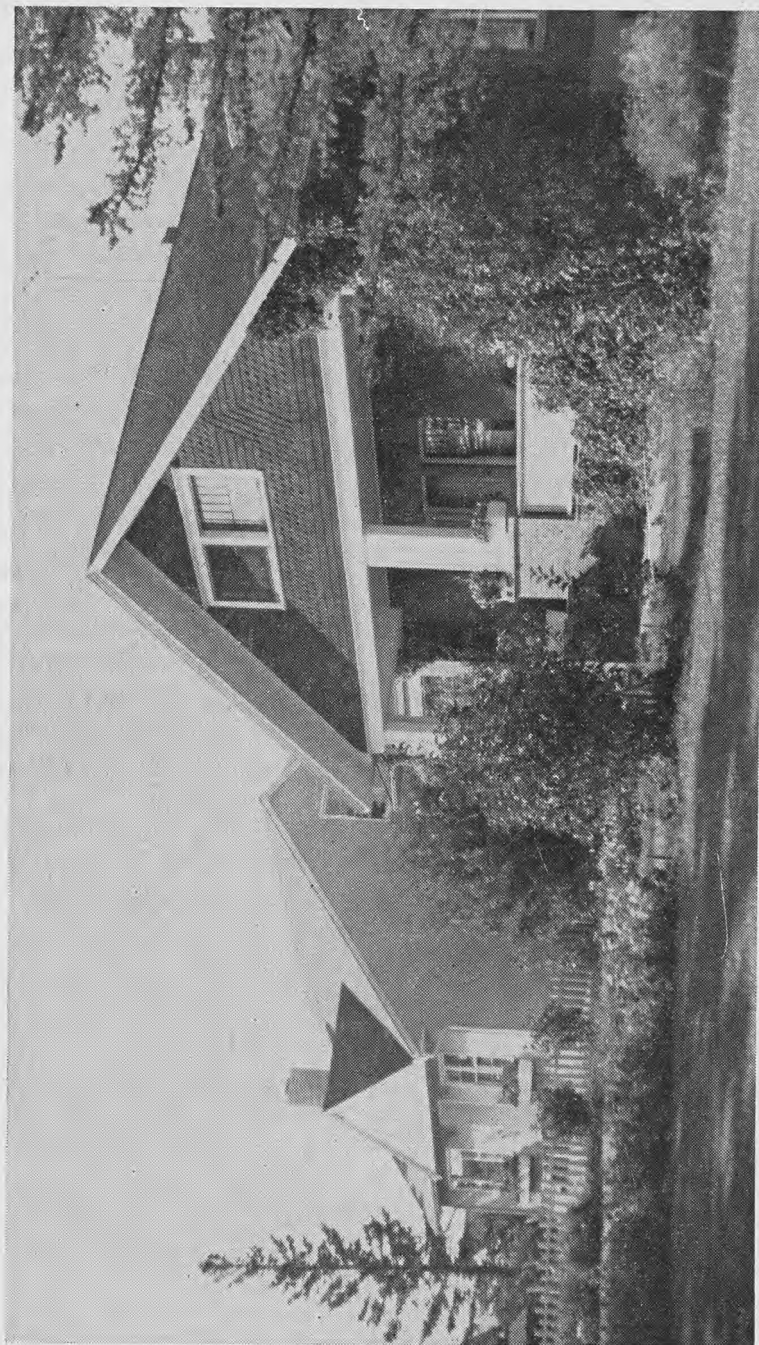


Photo by Mrs. John Hamilton
The Old and New First United Church Manses on Tofield Street (108 St.), 1957

for the new Manse, this being the brick house immediately north of the present Manse. Rev. D. C. Ramsey began his Ministry in March, 1928, and in the fall of the same year moved into the new Manse.¹

The town of Fort Saskatchewan suffered with the rest of the country through the depression of the 'thirties. The population was decreasing slightly at this time and there was a real struggle to make ends meet. It seemed as if the Fort had reached and passed the peak of its development, and that it was doomed to a static, unexciting future. Property values were dropping rapidly, the optimism of 1911 had evaporated completely, there was no view of any new developments, and, anyway, money was more than scarce. Certainly the church had great difficulty in financing its way. On the rural field Rev. E. J. Hodgins was in the middle of a long 12-year Ministry, during which both Mrs. Hodgins and himself won the hearts of the people. The Official Board met on December 15th, 1930, and "Mr. Hodgins offered in view of the present depression to reduce his salary by \$500," an offer the Board accepted with the sincerest of appreciation. Even so, by April of the following year there was still \$10 owing on the Minister's salary for 1930. It is interesting to note that the question of admitting women to the Session was being raised on the rural field at this time, and a vote by ballot was taken at the Board meeting on December 19th, 1931. The result was 8 in favour and 1 opposed. In town the new Manse on Tofield Street was proving to be a burden almost impossible to carry. However, the ladies of the church kept working, raising money in this way and that, and to them must go the credit for the eventual paying of the debt.

¹In a letter from Dr. Ramsey, dated March 27th, 1957, he makes a guess that he moved into the new Manse towards the end of September or at the beginning of October.



Simmons' Opera House (Erected 1906) and Residence, 1910 or 1911

These buildings stood on Ross Street (102 St.) almost opposite the Community Hall. The opera house was dismantled in 1935 and the lumber used to construct the Partridge Hill Community Hall the same year.

The depression left its mark on the rural field, and this factor, together with a growing shortage of ministers available, led to pressure being brought to bear by Presbytery to amalgamate the rural field with the town charge. Rev T. Musto had left the field at the end of October, 1940, and several meetings were held to discuss the question. In the meantime H. M. Wingfield was invited to provide Sunday supply for the winter "in view of calling him after he is ordained."¹ Also, early in 1941, the Manse in Fort Saskatchewan that was used by the Minister of the rural field was sold for \$350. The plan for amalgamation at this time fell through and H. M. Wingfield was called after Conference in 1941 to serve the field. The Manse procured for him was 1½ miles east of the Partridge Hill Church, the home

¹Minutes of the Official Board, December 9th, 1940.

now occupied by G. E. ("Ted") Osbaldeston. Rev. H. M. Wingfield served the field for two years, leaving at the end of July, 1943. The question of amalgamation was raised again, and by this time it was seen to be the most logical move, with the result that in 1943 the rural field and the town charge were united under the name of Fort Saskatchewan Pastoral Charge with Rev. E. H. Birdsall, the Minister at the Fort, continuing as Minister of the new united field. During the amalgamation Patricia was removed from the Fort and taken into the Namao Pastoral Charge. Over the next few years a process of centralization took place, Beaver Hills eventually uniting with the Fort, and Good Hope and Ypres Valley in due course combining with Partridge Hill, thus creating by February, 1956, a 2-point Pastoral Charge—First United Church, Fort Saskatchewan, and Partridge Hill.

Chapter 9

1945-1957: THE POST-WAR BOOM

By the end of the second world war the town of Fort Saskatchewan was in a very low state. The population had dropped to a little over 900 since the previous peak period of over 30 years before. The property assessment was not even one-seventh of the reported figure in 1911.¹ Yet there were still men who had faith in the future of Fort Saskatchewan, and strenuous efforts were made to modernize the town and make it a place attractive to both people and industry. By the turn of the decade these efforts were already bearing fruit. Fort Saskatchewan was not even linked to the City of Edmonton by a good paved road at this time, the pavement only reaching as far as Horse Hill. However, as a result of negotiations with the Provincial Government, the balance of the road was paved in 1950 and 1951. In 1948 a new three-room school had been built and opened (the present High School), but it was soon too small, and additions were built in 1950 and 1951. In 1950 a further tremendous improvement in the facilities of the town took place with the installation of natural gas. On Friday, October 27th, of that year over 400 people gathered at the corner of 102 St. and 100 Ave. (on the site of the present Canadian Bank of Commerce) to watch the appropriate ceremonies. The Mayor, C. F. Lowe, turned the valve which brought in the town's first gas with a roar, and flames from a specially-prepared flare line shot 20 feet into the air. The next great step forward was the installation of a water and sewer system in 1951, the people having voted heavily in favour of it the previous August. The stage was now set for the new and spectacular developments that were shortly to come.

¹1911: \$639,095; 1945: \$86,941.

In December, 1951, the town was notified by phone from the east that Sherritt Gordon Mines Ltd. had decided to establish a multi-million dollar nickel refinery at Fort Saskatchewan. The news spread like wildfire, and before morning there was hardly a person in town who had not heard the exciting news. Sherritt Gordon began the work of construction on a section and a quarter of land just east of the Fort in May, 1952, the initial outlay being close to 25 million dollars. Since that date about $4\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars worth of improvements have been added, and in the spring of 1957 work on a further $11\frac{1}{2}$ million dollar extension was started. The plant began production in May, 1954, and the first shipment of nickel was made in August of the same year. Nickel concentrate is brought by rail from mines in northern Manitoba and it is refined chemically, production at the moment being at the approximate rate of 20 million pounds of nickel (over 99.5% pure) per year. The most important by-product is ammonium sulphate fertilizer, with estimated production of 90,000 tons for 1957. In 1956 40,000 tons of fertilizer was exported to Korea, the Philippines, Hawaii, Indonesia, New Zealand, and Mexico. A further 30,000 tons was shipped to the United States, with minor amounts going to Canadian markets. Since January, 1955, between 600 and 650 men have been employed at the plant. It is anticipated that there will be a continuing expansion of the plant over the years.

Some further industries began to locate at Fort Saskatchewan. In January, 1955, Inland Chemicals Canada Ltd. began the construction of a million-dollar sulphuric acid plant near Sherritt Gordon's, who were to be one of their main customers, though their product was also to be marketed throughout the prairie provinces. Sulphur for the plant is shipped in from southern Alberta. The plant went into production at the end of August,

1955, the capacity being 100 tons a day, giving employment to about 15 men.

Peace River Glass Company Ltd. also decided to establish an industry in Fort Saskatchewan, construction of a plant costing three-quarters of a million dollars being started in April, 1955. Production began in October of the same year, though maximum production was not reached until March, 1956. Early in 1957 work was started on an extension to the original building to cost another three-quarters of a million dollars. The total operational staff, about 70 persons at present, is expected to be over 80. The Company is interested primarily in producing glass fibre for industrial use. With the present equipment installed in the plant a five-foot glass rod almost the diameter of a lead pencil can be spun into about 400 miles of glass fibre so fine and elastic that it can be woven into a fabric. The main product at present is plastic-bonded glass-fibre mats for wrapping pipe in the gas and oil pipeline industry for protection against the elements. At the moment the glass rods are imported from Great Britain, but within a year or two the Company hopes to have its own melting plant, for the Provincial Government has granted it a 21-year lease on an extensive sand deposit of over 11,000 acres, 7 miles from Peace River. The vein of sand is 12 feet deep, and it will be taken out by strip mining. The manufacturing process used at the plant was devised by W. H. W. Schuller, President of the Company, during years spent by him in a Nazi concentration camp. Thus an entirely new and important product to Alberta has been developed, and it is the only plant of its kind west of Sarnia, Ontario.

With all this exciting new industrial development, the town itself began to go ahead by leaps and bounds. Within a period of five years the population very nearly

tripled itself, the figure for 1957 being 3,012. The property assessment jumped from \$86,941 in 1945 to \$2,728,000 in 1957. Many fine new houses were built (certain minimum specifications being laid down by the Council to prevent Fort Saskatchewan from becoming a 'shack' town), new families moved in by the score, and the facilities of the town were strained to their utmost. In 1955 a new elementary school was built and opened for use that fall, and in the summer of 1957 the construction of a new High School was commenced. A water tower,¹ with a capacity of 250,000 gallons, sufficient to meet the needs of a town of 14,000, was constructed in 1956 at a cost of \$86,000. With an eye to the future, also, the town in 1956 procured almost 145 acres of land at a cost of \$34,000, which will provide for about 700 home sites. In 1956, also, Sherritt Gordon Mines Ltd. made a most acceptable gift to the town of a swimming pool, costing about \$72,000. This very generous gift was suitably accepted on behalf of the town by the Mayor, C. F. Lowe. Thus, by the middle of this decade, a great new wave of optimism spread over the town. The industrial development was an accomplished fact, bringing with it a great increase in population. The town facilities were expanding steadily year by year, and it seemed as if the hopes and dreams of 1911 were at last coming true.

The churches, too, were caught up in this new age of progress. The new St. George's Anglican Church had been dedicated in 1951, and by 1954 the Nazarene Church was becoming established. Rev. William C. Baptiste came to the Fort in the summer of 1954, and the first Nazarene service was held on September 26th, 1954. The church building was erected in 1956, the

¹By arrangement with the Provincial Government the town had been using the water tower at the gaol up to this time.

official opening being on October 7th of that year. The congregation will be organized officially in 1958. In 1952 Christ Lutheran Church (affiliated with the Missouri Synod) was established under Pastor F. A. Schole, with services held in the Legion Hall above the Town Hall. Plans were made under the leadership of the present Minister, Pastor W. H. Eifert, to build a church on Lowe Avenue, and construction was begun in June, 1957.

First United Church, Fort Saskatchewan, was also profoundly affected by the new developments, though it began this period with a major tragedy. In the late evening of Wednesday, March 5th, 1947, smoke was noticed billowing from the rear of the church. The fire department was summoned immediately, but little could



Photo Courtesy J. P. Galloway

First United Church (The Old Methodist Church)



Photo Courtesy Elwood Galloway

First United Church on Fire, March 5th, 1947

be done to save the 45-year old building and the church was completely gutted. All the contents were lost, including the new memorial Minshall organ which was barely a year old, the brass plaque in memory of the late Mrs. Alexander Forbes, and a large framed photograph of the original log church of 1887. It was a staggering blow, especially as the building was badly underinsured, but committees were immediately set up to deal with the question of rebuilding. Services were held in the Community Hall during the summer of 1947 while building was in progress. The basement was

completed during the summer and the official opening took place in conjunction with the 60th anniversary celebrations on Sunday, October 19th, 1947.¹ Strenuous and sacrificial efforts were made to ensure the completion of the new church at the earliest opportunity, and it was on Sunday, September 18th, 1949, that the fine, new church building was opened and dedicated.²

During these years a project of the Edmonton Presbytery was taking shape, and plans for the opening of a home for elderly ladies in Fort Saskatchewan were being completed. On Sunday, October 31st, 1948, over 500 visitors attended the formal opening of the Agnes Forbes' Home (the name soon to be changed to the Agnes Forbes' Lodge), designed to accommodate 10 guests. Since that date an addition to the original house has been built, which doubles the available accommodation. The extension was constructed at a cost of \$18,500 and was formally opened on Sunday, October 4th, 1953. Mrs. G. Dundas is the present matron, having served in this capacity for seven years.

At Partridge Hill widespread improvements were being made to the church in 1953. The tower and vestibule were added to the front of the church, and the whole interior was renovated. The service of rededication was to be held on May 3rd, 1953, but bad roads caused the postponement of this service until May 10th, one week before the 50th anniversary services. Barely a year elapsed, when on Sunday, April 25th, 1954, the janitor

¹Rev. E. H. Birdsall (1940-1944) was present to open and dedicate the basement of the new church at the morning service. Rev. C. E. A. Pocock (1925-1928) was the guest preacher in the evening.

²Rev. Robert Simons (1934-1940), President of Conference, dedicated the church at the morning service, Rev. R. McElroy Thompson preaching the sermon. Rev. E. H. Birdsall preached at the afternoon service, and Rev. Robert Simons at night.

noticed smoke coming out of the church. The men of the district were contacted about 11 a.m. They formed a bucket brigade and for two hours tried desperately to save the church. At one point the fight seemed hopeless, but gradually the fire was brought under control. At 1 p.m. the fire engine from Oliver arrived and the fire was finally put out. The damage was extensive, the basement being gutted and upstairs there being much smoke and water damage, but fortunately the church was well insured, and that summer the damage was repaired and the church redecorated. Services were held in the Partridge Hill Community Hall until Sunday, August 1st, 1954, and special services to mark the re-opening of the church were held two weeks later on August 15th.

By this time in the Fort the feeling was growing that something should be done about the Manse, which needed quite extensive renovations and repairs. It was decided that, instead of putting this money into an old house, it would be wiser to build a new Manse. Accordingly, the old brick Manse, which had served since 1928, was sold, one lot immediately south of it being retained by the church. Upon this lot a new Manse was erected in 1954, much of the work being done by volunteer labour, and it was completed that winter. On March 10th, 1955, the new \$15,000 Manse was officially opened and dedicated. By the close of 1956 all debts on the church and Manse had been paid,¹ and the church was again looking to the future. In January, 1957, it was decided to purchase a new Hammond organ at a cost of over \$3,500, and it was installed in the church the same month.

¹The balance owing was paid out of a most generous legacy, bequeathed to the church by Mrs. E. Clark.

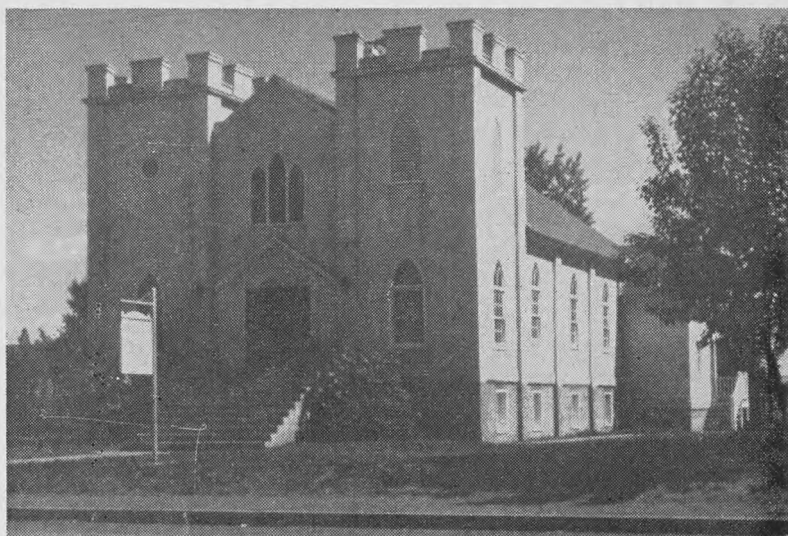


Photo by Dr. W. A. Johnstone

First United Church, 1957

The new church, built after the fire of 1947, had been erected and designed to meet very different conditions from those that were in existence in the 1950's. The sudden increase in population had taxed the facilities of the church to the utmost, particularly in the Sunday School department. By the close of 1956 the enrolment was 239, and the church membership itself had risen by mid-1957 to 290. Thus, in January, 1957, the congregation made arrangements for a committee to be appointed to review the whole future needs of the church, both with respect to property and new buildings.

* * *

Thus, over 75 years from the date of the first Presbyterian service in the Fort and 70 years from the building of the first little log Presbyterian Church, First United Church looks to the future realistically, optimistically, and with deep faith. As the past comes under review, what deep gratitude to Almighty God must

be expressed for those intrepid pioneers of the Church, for those who have guided its affairs through prosperous years and lean ones, and for those anonymous saints who have consolidated the work of the Church and made of it truly a Church of the living God. Through the work of faithful men and women (and sometimes despite them!) God has been establishing His work, until, looking back over the years, we can truly say that "this work was wrought of our God."¹ The foundation has been laid. The future alone will determine whether the foundation was laid in vain. The responsibility has been handed on to the present generation, which will, with God's help, discharge its sacred trust with faithfulness. This is God's work; the Church is the Body of Christ; our enabling power is the Holy Spirit.

*"Faith of our fathers, holy faith,
We will be true to thee till death."*²

¹Nehemiah 6:16.

²F. W. Faber. The Hymnary of the United Church of Canada, No. 399.

APPENDIX

LIST OF MINISTERS AND STUDENTS

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Andrew B. Baird

January 8th, 1882 to August 1887.

Supervised Fort Saskatchewan during this period, with services every fourth Sunday in the barracks. He had student help, especially in the outlying areas from Edmonton, during the summer months. 1884, John L. Campbell. 1885, James Hamilton. 1886, Andrew S. Grant. 1887, Andrew S. Grant.¹

David George McQueen

June, 1887 to December, 1894.

Associated with Rev. A. B. Baird until August, 1887, when he continued to supervise Fort Saskatchewan by himself until the arrival of Rev. A. Forbes. June, 1888, to the fall of 1889, William A. Bradley undertook the work at Fort Saskatchewan specifically, taking a year's extra-mural course from Queen's University. 1890, vacant. 1891, William Wilkie.² 1892, vacant. 1893, H. S. Ferguson. 1894, Anderson.³

Alexander Forbes

December, 1894 to February, 1910.

The first resident Minister. Officially called on February 16th, 1904, after the status of the church had been changed and they were permitted to call their own Minister.

¹According to E. A. Corbett: *McQueen of Edmonton*, p.46, though the listing for 1887 was 'vacant.'

²The listing for 1891 was also 'vacant,' though J. P. Berry writes: "Mr. William Wilkie became a resident student missionary (i.e. at Clover Bar) in 1891, preaching also at Strathcona, Partridge Hills and Fort Saskatchewan. He served also as the first teacher in the newly-organized public school." (*Clover Bar in the Making*, 1881-1931, p.21).

³The listing for 1894 was again 'vacant.' However, the Edmonton Bulletin for May 10th, 1894, mentions Mr. Anderson as the Presbyterian student missionary at Fort Saskatchewan.

D. J. GrahamNovember,¹ 1910 to October, 1916.**M. S. Kerr**

April, 1917 to February, 1924.

He preached at the Fort from January, 1917, while still a student at college. He was ordained in the Presbyterian Church at Fort Saskatchewan on April 19th, 1917.

C. E. A. PocockMay,² 1924 to Church Union (June, 1925).

THE METHODIST CHURCH

Methodist students were not assigned to fields for the summer only (as were the Presbyterian students), but were put on probation on fields by the full year, two or three years being required before ordination, according to educational standing. Students served in the Fort Saskatchewan area a short while before the first Minister was appointed, and they continued to serve, especially in the rural areas, for many years afterwards. The first recorded contact with the Fort Saskatchewan district is through Beaver Creek, which first appears in the Methodist Year Book in 1895. **Rev. Arthur Whiteside** was stationed there from April, 1896, to June, 1897, and he preached every two weeks at Agricola and Josephburg, and every four weeks at Deep Creek. His appointments stretched from Agricola to the east side of Beaver Lake. **J. C. Howey** was listed at 'Agricola and Beaver Creek' from 1898 to 1899. Later he went on the staff of the Edmonton Bulletin. 'Victoria and Beaver Creek' is listed for 1899 and 1900 with **Rev. John Scott** stationed there and one more person needed. He evidently had some connection with the Fort district, for two baptisms are recorded as performed by him in Fort Saskatchewan on February 14th, 1900, and two others at Beaver Hills on May 21st, 1900, and May 19th, 1901. Beaver Creek disappears from the records in 1901, and Star appears in 1902. In 1906 the name of the field is changed to Lamont. Victoria continued until 1922, with someone there each year except 1901-1903. Fort Saskatchewan first appears in the records in 1900, and from then on the Methodist students known to have been in the district are as follows:

¹This month has not been verified beyond dispute, but the first Session meeting with Mr. Graham was held on November 15th, 1910, and special services on the third anniversary of his induction were held on November 9th, 1913.

²In a letter dated March 14th, 1957, Mr. Pocock writes: "I think that it was the 1st. of May, 1925, that I took charge of the work."

Charles S. Laidman	1900 to 1901. He was in charge of Fort Saskatchewan and the rural areas around the town. C. S. Laidman's name appears at Strathcona in 1899, and he was at Agricola for a funeral on November 1st, 1899. W. W. Adamson was also at Agricola for a baptism on December 1st, 1899, and at Fort Saskatchewan for a burial on October 21st, 1899. The boundaries were evidently quite loose in this period.
George Sparling	1901 to 1902. He was in charge of Fort Saskatchewan until the arrival of Rev. A. R. Aldridge, when he continued as his assistant in the rural areas particularly. Later he went to China.
S. H. Kruger	1902 to 1903, assistant to Rev. A. R. Aldridge.
John Tough	1903 to 1904. He served the rural field under Rev. A. R. Aldridge, coming from college each week-end during the winter. 1904 to 1905. Uncertain, but the name of G. N. Magwood appears as conducting a funeral at Beaver Hills during this period.
J. F. Woodsworth	1905 to 1906, living at Beaver Hills. He is at present retired, but still working as Hospital Chaplain in Edmonton.
William J. Hampton	1906 to 1907, assistant to Rev. Wm. J. Howard.
Armin A. Holzer	1907 to 1908, a Jewish Christian stationed at Beaver Hills. This is the first time that Beaver Hills appears as a station in the records.
A. D. McConnell	1908 to 1909, the student at Beaver Hills.
Samuel Webster	1909 to 1910, at Beaver Hills.

	1910 to 1911; listed as 'one wanted.'
Bert Waddington	1911 to 1912, stationed at Beaver Hills, which disappears from the records after this year.
William J. Berry	1912 to 1913, assistant.
Sidney Pike	1913 to 1915, student assistant for two years.
C. B. Wilson	1914 to 1915, second student assistant, stationed at Bruderheim. In 1915 the eastern part of the Fort Saskatchewan Mission became a field on its own, and Bruderheim appears in the records for the first time that year with Rev. James A. Sinclair as Minister from 1915 to 1916. For 1916 to 1917 Fred E. Wilson is named as at Bruderheim.

The duly appointed ordained Ministers, resident in the Fort, were as follows:

Albert R. Aldridge	September, 1901 to June, ¹ 1905.
William J. Howard	July, ¹ 1905 to June, 1909.
William J. Conoly	July, 1909 to June, ¹ 1911.
Ernest J. Tate	July, ¹ 1911 to June, 1912.
Charles H. Johnson	June, 1912 to June, ¹ 1915.
George F. Driver	June, 1915 to June, ¹ 1919.
Arthur H. Rowe	July, ¹ 1919 to June, 1922.
Morris Lindsay Wright	July, 1922 to Church Union (June, 1925).

¹The month is presumed, this being the end of the Methodist year. In general it agrees with the evidence of the baptismal, marriage and funeral registers.

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

FORT SASKATCHEWAN (RURAL)

Morris Lindsay Wright	June, 1925 to June, 1926.
Elmore J. Hodgins	July, 1926 to June, 1938.
Thomas Musto	July, 1938 to October, 1940.
H. M. Wingfield	June, 1941, to July, 1943. He also served the field as a student for the winter of 1940-41, being called to the Charge upon his ordination. Following H. M. Wingfield's departure the town and rural Pastoral Charges were amalgamated, though the name does not disappear from the official records until 1945.

FORT SASKATCHEWAN

C. E. A. Pocock	June, 1925 to March, 1928.
Douglas C. Ramsey	April, ¹ 1928 to September, 1934.
Robert Simons	December, 1934 to June, 1940.
E. H. Birdsall	July, 1940 to December, 1944.
Winfield D. Race	February, 1945 to June, 1949.
A. W. Magee	July, 1949 to June, 1955.
Ernest L. Bishop	July, 1955 to August, 1956.
Peter T. Ream	September, 1956.

¹Rev. D. C. Ramsey's Ministry began officially on April 1st, 1928, but he supplied for two or three Sundays in March, thus permitting Rev. C. E. A. Pocock to leave (under doctor's orders) a few weeks early.

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INDEX

(‘n’ refers to a footnote)

- Aberdeen: 57, 57n
 Acadia: 3
 Adamson, Alex.: 56n
 Adamson, J. B.: 123, 123n
 Agnes Forbes' Lodge: 60, 134
 Agricola: 56, 57, 60, 76, 84, 112, 117n
 Alberta: 8, 23, 25, 47, 51, 52, 55, 75, 91, 92, 93, 96n, 98, 129, 130
 Alberta Hotel—see Hotels.
 Alberta, University of: 30
 Aldridge, Rev. A. R.: 79, 81, 119
 Andrew (Franciscan Lay-Brother): 89
 Andrew (Town): 66
 Anglican Church
 —Agricola: 57
 —Beaver Lake: 63
 —Bon Accord: 64
 —Fort Saskatchewan: 62, 63, 64, 131
 —1895 Church: 63, 64
 —1951 Church: 64, 131
 —Rectory: 64
 —Gibbons: 64
 —Partridge Hill: 82
 —Redwater: 64
 —Saddle Lake: 63
 —Diocese of Edmonton: 64
 Arctic: 13n, 55
 Ardrossan: 112
 Arthur, Father: 91
 Asher, John: 84, 112
 Assiniboines—see Indians.
 Athabasca Landing: 86
 Athabasca River—see Rivers.
 Atlantic Ocean: 13n
 Attewell, T. H.: 81n
 Augustine, L. B.: 123
 Augustus, Fort—see Forts.
 Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales: 11n
 Austria: 65
 Aylen, Dr. Peter: 92n
 Baetz, G. O.: 105n
 Baird, Miss: 88
 Baird, Rev. A. B.: 47, 48, 50, 54, 55
 Ball, The Messrs.: 59n
 Baptiste, Rev. William C.: 131
 Barr Colony: 92
 Battleford: 37, 39, 39n, 92
 Beatty, George: 50
 Beatty, Walter: 50
 Beauchamp, J.: 92n
 Beaupre, Jean-Baptiste: 34
 Beaver Creek: 76
 Beaver Hills: 56, 77, 78, 79, 82, 117, 117n, 118, 123n, 127
 Beaver Hills Chimes: 79, 79n
 Beaver Lake: 63, 66n, 76, 77
 Becker: 66n, 67
 Becker, Frank: 66n, 67n
 Becker, George: 66n
 Becker, George: 66n, 67n
 Becker, Jacob: 66n, 67
 Belcher, Harry: 48n
 Belcher, Mary: 48n
 Belcher, Percy: 48n
 Belcher, Robert: 37n, 48n
 Bellevue, Sask.: 51n
 Belly River—see Rivers.
 Belmont: 48
 Bennett, Dr. F. T.: 92n
 Benton, Fort—see Forts.
 Berchmans, Father: 89
 Berg, Adam: 66n
 Berg, Adam: 66n
 Berg, John: 66n
 Berry, William J.: 117
 Berube, Father Roland: 36, 92

- "Birch Hills": 1, 9
 Birdsall, Rev. E. H.: 127, 134n
 Blackfeet—*see* Indians.
 Blanchet, Father A.: 34
 Blythe, W.: 109
 Boivin: 105
 Bolton: 123n
 Bomerlan, Peter: 67n
 Bon Accord: 64, 96n
 Boniface, Father: 91
 Boundary Commission: 24, 25
 Bourque, George: 34
 Bowden, Bill: 93n
 Bowden, Jack: 93n
 Bowell: 109n
 Bradshaw: 37n
 Brazeau, John: 36
 Bremner: 9
 Brigham, Mrs. Sarah: 115
 Brigidau: 65
 Brisebois, E. A.: 23
 Britain: 3, 10, 13n, 130
 British Columbia: 33, 55
 Broeder, Jacob: 66n
 Bruce, John: 17, 17n
 Bruderheim: 74n, 117, 118
 Brunette, Phileas: 52
 Buchanan, Agnes (Mrs. S. Pike): 117n
 Buckingham House: 11
 Butler, W. F.: 18, 19, 70n

 Calgary: 9, 39, 51, 54, 55, 102, 112
 California: 36
 Canada: 3, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 33, 39, 52, 55, 122, 129
 Canadian Bank of Commerce: 128
 Canadian National Railway: 52
 Canadian Northern Railway: 70, 91, 93n, 95, 100, 102, 103, 105, 107
 Canadian Pacific Railway: 33n, 37, 47, 50, 51, 65
 Cape Breton: 3
 Carlton, Fort—*see* Forts.
 Carrot River—*see* Rivers.
 Carscadden, A. M.: 92n, 103n
 Carter, G. B.: 56n
 Carvell, J. E.: 23
 Cedar Lake: 6n
 Chabot, Joe: 37n
 Chamberlayne, McNichol &: 72
 Chamberlayne, William: 37n
 Charles II, King: 3
 Chauvin: 8
 Chicago: 21
 Chinook Winds: 27, 65
 Christ Lutheran Church: 132
 Church Union—*see* United Church of Canada.
 Churchill River—*see* Rivers.
 "City of Edmonton", The: 100
 "City of Strathcona", The: 100
 Clark and Underschultz: 92n
 Clark, Mrs. E.: 135n
 Clover Bar: 48, 50, 55, 68
 Clover, Thomas H.: 68
 Coal: 98
 Confederation: 16, 33
 Congregational Church: 122
 "Conservator, The": 105
 Consolidated Agencies Company: 105
 Cormack, Robert H.: 77
 Corne, Chevalier de la: 7, 7n
 Corne, Fort a la—*see* Forts.
 Court House: 59n, 107
 Coutts, Peter: 37n, 48n
 Cranston, George: 123
 Crees—*see* Indians.
 Cricket—*see* Sports.
 Crozier, L. N. F.: 23n
 Cullen: 37n
 Culvertson: 19
 Curling—*see* Sports.
 Curran, Mrs. Patrick: 51
 Cushing Brothers: 92n

 Dandy, Jim: 37n, 70
 Daniel, H. E.: 92n
 d'Artigue, Jean: 34

- "Dawson Route": 21
 d'Easum, B. C.: 92, 92n
 d'Easum, Rev. Geoffrey C.: 63
 Deep Creek: 28, 76, 78, 117, 117n, 118, 123n
 Deering, Sir Edward: 6
 "Deering's Point": 6
 Dickens, Francis J.: 39n
 Dickson, S. A.: 92n
 Donald, Dr. W. B. L.: 92n
 Dorais, Father Ernest: 34, 91
 Doran: 109n
 Doze, Gus: 26
 Draper, W. H., Chief Justice: 15
 Driggs, H. A.: 109
 Driver, Rev. George F.: 118, 119
 Dufferin, Fort—see Forts.
 Dundas, Mrs. G.: 134

 Edinburgh: 47
 Edmonton (also see Forts): 9, 12, 12n, 13, 13n, 14, 20, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 34n, 37, 39n, 41, 42, 44, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52n, 54, 55, 57, 59, 59n, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70n, 72, 75, 81, 85, 88, 91, 92, 93n, 96, 96n, 100, 102, 103, 105, 107, 109n, 118, 128, 134
 "Edmonton, City of", The: 100
 Edmonton, England: 12n
 Eifert, Rev. W. H.: 132
 Electricity—see Hydro-electric Plant.
 Elk Hart Lake: 68
 Elk Livery Stable: 92n
 Elk Point: 11
 Ellice, Fort—see Forts.
 Emerson: 21
 England: 3, 12n, 75, 105
 Estevan: 25
 Ethel Hotel—see Hotels.
 Evangelical Reformed Josephburg Congregation: 68
 —Earliest Church: 67, 67n
 —1910 Church: 67n, 68
 —1916 Parsonage: 67, 68

 Fargo: 21
 Farmers' Feed Livery Stable: 92n
 Ferries, The: 70, 72
 Fire of 1913, The: 103, 105
 Fluker, Allison: 79
 Fluker, Mrs. John: 77
 Fluker, T. A. ("Doc"): 77
 Fluker, William H.: 78
 Fluker's Grove: 78, 117
 Forbes, Agnes, Lodge: 60, 134
 Forbes, Agnes Sorrel: 59, 60, 82, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 110, 133
 Forbes, Rev. Alexander: 57, 57n, 59, 60, 60n, 62, 82, 84, 85, 86, 89, 110
 Forbes, Mrs. J. F.: 57n

 Forts
 —Augustus (1): 11, 11n, 12, 13n, 34n
 (2): 12, 13
 (3): 13
 (4): 13

 —Benton: 19
 —Carlton: 20, 27, 29
 —Corne, a la: 7, 7n, 10
 —Dufferin: 21, 22, 23n, 24
 —Edmonton (1): 12, 12n, 13n, 34n
 (2): 12, 13
 (3): 13, 14
 (4): 13, 14, 20, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 47, 50, 62, 68, 68, 70n, 75

 —Ellice: 22, 27
 —Garry: 18, 33
 —Garry, Lower: 21, 22
 —George: 11
 —Kipp: 20
 —La Jonquiere: 7, 7n
 —La Reine: 7
 —MacLeod: 27, 37
 —Maurepas: 7
 —Pasquia: 7, 7n, 10
 —Pembina: 22
 —Pitt: 39n

- Vermilion: 11
- Whoop-Up: 20, 23, 26, 27
- Fort Hotel—see Hotels.
- Fort Saskatchewan Brick Company: 98
- Fort Saskatchewan (Rural) Pastoral Charge—see United Church of Canada.
- Fort Saskatchewan Townsite Company: 92
- France: 3
- Franciscan Fathers: 89, 91, 92
- Free Trade (in furs): 15, 18, 19, 33
- French, George A.: 21, 22, 25, 30
- Frey, Wilhelm: 67n
- “Friedens Gemeinde”: 67
- Frog Lake: 39, 39n.
- Gagnon, Severe: 26, 29, 37, 37n, 39, 48
- Galicia: 65
- Galloway, J. P.: 57n
- Gaol—see Provincial Gaol.
- Garry, Fort—see Forts.
- Garry, Lower Fort—see Forts.
- Gas—see Natural Gas.
- Gauf, Valentin: 67n
- Geistlinger, Heinrich: 67n
- Geldert: 37n
- George, Fort—see Forts.
- George IV, King: 11n
- German Reformed Church: 66
- Germany: 47
- Geyer, George: 4
- Gibbons: 64
- Glasgow: 60
- Gold and Gold Panning: 19, 68, 70, 70n, 105
- Good Hope: 117, 118, 123n, 127
- Gourley: 92n
- Graeser, Rev. C. W. F.: 67
- Graham, Alex.: 105
- Graham, Rev. D. J.: 110, 112
- Graham, Mrs. D. J.: 110, 111, 112
- Graham, Jones, & O'Brien: 103n
- Graham and McEvoy: 92n
- Grand Trunk Pacific: 102, 107
- Grande Prairie: 86, 89
- Grandin, Bishop: 36
- Grant, Rev. Principal: 47
- Grant, Andrew S.: 54
- Griesbach, A. H.: 21, 39, 41, 48, 52
- Guthrie, Richard: 66n
- Half-breeds—see Metis.
- Halpenny, J.: 50, 72
- Haly, James, & Co.: 72, 74
- Hardisty, Richard: 29, 30
- Hare, Robert: 76, 81n
- Hare, Mrs. Robert: 77
- Hawaii: 129
- Healy: 19
- Heiminck, Philip: 48n, 50, 72,
- Henday, Anthony: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
- Henderson, Charles: 41, 48n, 52
- Hennig, Rev. Edmund L.: 68
- Hennig, Jacob: 66n, 67, 67n, 68
- Henry, Alexander, the Younger: 13
- “Herald, The”: 96, 100
- Herchmer, W. M.: 37
- “Hermitage, The”: 62
- Hodgins, Rev. Elmore J.: 78n, 125
- Hodgins, Mrs. E. J. 125
- Holy Cross, Sisters of: 36
- Horse Hill: 57, 60, 66, 128
- Hortonburg: 112
- Hotels
 - Alberta: 100
 - Ethel: 72
 - Fort: 105n
 - Mansion House: 74, 92n
 - Palace: 63n, 72, 72n
 - Queens: 92n, 103, 105n
 - Saskatchewan: 72
- Houston, Robert: 81n, 82n
- Huddleson: 109n
- Hudson Bay: 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 13n
- Hudson's Bay Company: 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12n, 13, 13n, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 27, 29, 30, 33, 47, 51

- Hudson's Bay Territory: 3, 10, 16
 Hughes: 11
 Hunter, R. B.: 123
 Hunter, W. J.: 92
 Hurley: 37n
 Hutterite Colony (Scotford): 79
 Hydro-electric Plant: 98, 102, 103

 Indians: 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 18, 19, 22, 26, 33, 36, 52, 75, 76
 —Assiniboines: 9, 10
 —Blackfeet: 8, 9, 12, 18, 19, 22, 25
 —Crees: 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 18, 28n, 36, 39n, 75
 —Ojibway: 75
 —Piegan: 18
 —Sioux: 18
 Indonesia: 129
 Ingles, Mrs.: 52, 57n
 Inland Chemicals Canada Ltd.: 129
 Innisfail: 8
 Isham, James: 8

 Jarvis, Rev. S. H. F.: 64
 Jarvis, W. D.: 21, 23, 25, 26, 29, 30, 37, 109n
 Jasper: 33
 Jenkins: 109n
 Johnson, Rev. Charles H.: 77, 115, 117, 118
 Jones, Graham & O'Brien: 103n
 Jones, S. O.: 103
 Josefsberg (Austria): 65
 Josefsberg (east of Fort Saskatchewan): 66
 Josefsberg (south Alberta): 65
 Josephburg: 66, 66n, 67, 68, 76, 77
 Josephburg Reformed Church—see Evangelical Reformed Josephburg Congregation.

 Kamloops: 33
 Kamsack: 6n
 Karran, Alf.: 64
 Karran, Jack: 64
 Kelly, Mrs. Jacob: 76
 Kelsey, Henry: 4, 5, 7
 Kelterborn, E.: 123
 Kerr, Rev. M. S.: 112, 113, 114, 115, 120, 120n, 121
 Kerr, Mrs. M. S.: 114, 115
 Kimball: 92n
 Kinistino: 7
 Kipp, Fort—see Forts.
 Kis-ses-kat-chewan—see Rivers
 Kittson, Dr. J. G.: 25
 Knox College: 47
 Korea: 129
 Koroluk, Stefan: 67n
 Krebs, Carl: 57
 Krebs, Daniel: 67n
 Krebs, John: 66n
 Krieger, Rev. John F.: 68
 Kulak, Ludwig: 67n

 La Jonquiere, Fort—see Forts.
 La Reine, Fort—see Forts.
 La Verendrye: 7
 La Verendrye, Pierre: 7
 Laidman, C. S.: 77, 77n
 Lake, Sir John: 12n
 Lake of the Woods, The: 16n
 Lambert, Henri: 34
 Lamoureux District: 34, 70, 89, 91, 92
 Lamoureux, Francois: 33, 50, 51, 70
 Lamoureux, Hypolite: 34
 Lamoureux, Joseph: 33, 34, 50, 63, 70
 Lamoureux, Roland: 72n
 Lamoureux, Theophile: 51, 72
 Lang, Andrew: 48n, 74
 Langworthy, W. F.: 92n
 Larose, J.: 92n
 Leduc, Father: 34, 36
 Leeson and Scott: 51
 Legal, Archbishop E. J.: 36, 91
 Legardeur, Jacques, de St. Pierre: 7

- Lestanc, Father: 34
 Lethbridge: 26
 Liquor and the Indians: 10, 19, 20, 26
 Lloydminster: 39n, 92
 London, England: 8, 10, 13
 Lord, G. S.: 123
 Lowe, C. F.: 128, 131
 Lower Fort Garry—see Forts.
 Lutheran Church, Christ: 132
- McClellan, Thomas B.: 119, 123
 MacDonald, A.: 50
 MacDonald, Sir John A.: 16
 McDougall Church, 1873: 75
 McDougall, Rev. George: 27, 75, 118
 McDougall, Rev. John: 75
 Macdougall, Hon. William: 17, 17n
 McEvoy, Graham and: 92n
 McGillicuddy: 109n
 McGillivray, Duncan: 11
 Mackenzie, Sir William: 100
 McLaughlin, Margaret (Mrs. M. S. Kerr): 114
 McLean, J. D.: 109, 109n
 MacLeod, Fort—see Forts.
 MacLeod, James F.: 21, 22, 26, 30
 McNicol, Andrew: 37n
 McNichol & Chamberlayne: 72
 McQueen, Rev. D. G.: 54, 55, 57, 59, 84, 88, 89, 113
- Maitland: 37n, 48n
 Manitoba: 21, 24, 129
 Manitoba College: 55
 Manses
 - Methodist
 - Edmonton: 118
 - Fort Saskatchewan
 - 1901: 79, 81, 115, 115n, 119, 123
 - Presbyterian
 - Edmonton: 54
- Fort Saskatchewan
 - Earliest: 57, 59
 - 1896: 59, 59n, 60, 86, 113, 114, 123
- United Church of Canada
 - First United Church
 - Old Presbyterian Manse: 123
 - 1928: 123, 125, 125n, 135
 - 1955: 125, 135
 - Fort Saskatchewan (Rural)
 - Old Methodist Manse: 123, 126
 - 1941: 126
- Mansion House Hotel—see Hotels.
 Manz, G.: 81
 Manz, Karl: 67n
 Markle, J. W. E.: 123
 Martin: 109n
 Matheson, Rev. R. N.: 112
 Maurepas, Fort—see Forts.
 Medicine Hat: 65
 Melfort: 6n
 Merchants Bank: 81
 Methodist Church: 66n, 75, 79, 81, 120, 122
 - Agricola: 57, 76, 117n
 - Beaver Creek: 76
 - Beaver Hills: 77, 78, 79, 117, 117n, 118
 - 1900 Church: 77, 78, 79, 117n
 - Bolton—see Riverside.
 - Bruderheim: 117, 118
 - Deep Creek: 76, 78, 117, 117n, 118
 - Edmonton: 47, 75
 - 1873 Church: 47, 75
 - Fluker's Grove: 78, 117
 - Fort Saskatchewan: 77, 79, 81, 115-119, 120-123
 - 1902 Church: 81, 115, 119, 122, 123
 - 1916 Hall: 119
 - Good Hope: 117, 118

- Josephburg: 66n, 76, 77
- Norway House: 75
- Parkside: 117, 118
- Partridge Hill: 57, 79, 82, 84, 117, 118, 121
- Pigeon Lake: 75
- Pleasant View: 117
- Riverside (Bolton): 81, 117, 118
- Victoria: 27, 75
- Whitefish Lake: 75
- Yorkville: 57, 117, 117n, 118
- Saskatchewan District: 75
- Methodist Missionary Society, Wesleyan: 75
- Metis (Half-breeds): 17, 17n, 19, 22, 23, 26, 41, 52, 62, 75, 89
- Mewhort, John: 37n, 48n
- Mexico: 129
- Middlesex, England: 12n
- Millette, N.: 91
- Missouri—see Rivers.
- Missouri (State): 68n
- Missouri Synod: 132
- Mohr, Friedrich: 66n
- Mohr, George Philip: 67n
- Mohr, Henry: 66n
- Mohr, Jacob: 66n
- Mohr, John, 66n, 67n
- Mohr, Mike: 66n
- Mohr, Philip: 66n, 67n
- Mohr, Philip: 66n
- Moncton: 109n
- Montana: 18
- Montreal: 10, 34
- Moody: 37n
- Moon, F.: 109
- Moon, P.: 109n
- Morgan, J. M.: 93
- Mulkins, Stuart D.: 52
- Musto, Rev. Thomas: 126
- Namao: 48, 57, 60, 112, 127
- Natural Gas: 128
- Nazarene Church: 131, 132
 - 1956 Church: 131, 132
- Neale, Percy R.: 21
- Nelson, Albert: 66n
- New Zealand: 129
- Newfoundland: 3
- Newton, Canon: 62, 63
- Nisbit, Rev. James: 47
- Niverville, Chevalier de: 7
- North Dakota: 18, 21, 22, 24, 82n
- North Edmonton: 91, 92
- North Saskatchewan—see Rivers.
- North-West Fur Company, The: 10, 11, 13n
- North-West Territories, The: 17, 17n, 20, 24, 33, 51, 52, 66
- “Northcote”, The: 51
- Norway House: 75
- “Notre Dame de Lourdes” Church: 34
- O’Brien, A. S.: 123
- O’Brien, Jones, Graham &: 103n
- Ojibway—see Indians.
- Old Man Creek: 9
- Oldman River—see Rivers.
- Oliver: 66, 135
- Ontario: 21, 82, 130
- Osbaldeston, G. E. (“Ted”): 127
- O’Sullivan, Tom: 91
- Ottawa: 17, 30, 100, 107
- “Our Lady of the Angels” Church: 91
- Pacific Ocean: 13n
- Pakan: 13, 28, 75
- Palace Hotel—see Hotels.
- Paris, Treaty of: 3
- Parker: 37n
- Parkside: 117, 118
- Parry Sound Colony: 82
- Partridge Hill: 57, 60, 79, 82, 84, 112, 117, 118, 121, 123n, 126, 127, 134, 135
- Pasquia, Fort—see Forts.
- Patricia: 123, 123n, 127

- Patteson: 109n
 Paul, John: 84, 112
 "Peace Congregation": 67
 Peace River—*see* Rivers.
 Peace River (District): 85, 102
 Peace River (Town): 130
 Peace River Glass Company Ltd.: 130
 Pembina, Fort—*see* Forts.
 Philippines, The: 129
 Piegans—*see* Indians.
 Pigeon Lake: 75
 Pike, Sidney: 117, 117n
 Pilon, Father Maxime: 91
 Pitt, Fort—*see* Forts.
 Pleasant View: 117
 Pocock, Rev. C. E. A.: 123, 134n
 Pollard, Miss: 93
 Portage La Prairie: 7
 Potts, Jerry: 26
 Presbyterian Church: 47, 55, 67, 77, 85, 122
 —Agricola: 56, 57, 60, 84, 112
 —1893 Church: 56, 57
 —Ardrossan: 112
 —Belmont: 48
 —Clover Bar: 48, 55
 —1888 Church: 55
 —Edmonton: 47, 48, 54, 57
 —1882 Church: 48, 57
 —Fort Saskatchewan: 48, 54, 55, 56, 57-62, 82, 84-86, 89, 110-115, 120-123, 136
 —1887 Church: 54, 55, 56, 59, 59n, 133, 136
 —1895 Church: 59, 59n, 84, 86, 113, 122, 123
 —Horse Hill: 57, 60
 —Hortonburg: 112
 —Josephburg: 67
 —Namao: 48, 57, 60, 112
 —Partridge Hill: 57, 60, 82, 84, 112, 121
 —1903 Church: 82
 —Patricia: 123, 123n
 —Sturgeon River—*see* Namao.
 —Calgary Presbytery: 55
 —Edmonton Presbytery: 59n, 67, 84, 85, 86, 113
 —Regina Presbytery: 54
 —General Assembly: 55, 121
 Provincial Gaol: 74, 91, 107, 109, 115, 123, 131n
 Pruden, John: 12n
 Quebec: 33, 105
 Queens Hotel—*see* Hotels.
 Ramsey, Rev. D. C.: 125, 125n
 Raphael (Franciscan Lay-Brother): 89
 Rat Creek: 29
 Reade, Jim: 36
 Red Deer: 65
 Red Deer River, Sask.—*see* Rivers.
 Red River—*see* Rivers.
 Redwater: 64
 Regina: 39, 42, 54, 107
 Reid, James: 34, 51
 Reith, Arthur: 56n
 "Reporter, The": 92
 Richer, T.: 23, 23n
 Riel, Louis: 17, 17n
 Riel Rebellion, First: 17
 Riel Rebellion, Second: 37, 39, 41
 Rippel, Adam: 66n
 Rivers
 —Athabasca: 4
 —Belly: 19
 —Carrot: 6n
 —Churchill: 4
 —Kis-ses-kat-chewan: 1
 —Missouri: 19
 —North Saskatchewan: 4, 9, 11, 16n, 20, 30, 50, 51, 68
 —Oldman: 23
 —Peace: 4
 —Red: 7, 17, 17n, 19, 21, 24, 75
 —Red Deer, Sask.: 6n
 —St. Lawrence: 3

- St. Mary: 23
- Saskatchewan: 1, 6n, 7, 15, 18, 19, 20, 29, 32, 33, 34, 47, 75, 91, 109n
- Souris: 25
- South Saskatchewan: 20
- Sturgeon: 1, 9, 11, 12, 28, 30, 62, 98, 103
- Riverside: 81, 117, 118
- Roche Percee: 25, 27
- Rocky Mountain House: 19
- Rocky Mountains: 1, 8, 16n, 24, 25
- Roman Catholic Church: 89
 - Fort Saskatchewan: 89, 91, 92, 107
 - 1908 Chapel: 91
 - 1909 Church: 91, 107
 - Lamoureux: 34, 89, 91, 92,
 - 1876 Chapel: 34
 - 1877-78 Church: 34
 - 1903 Church: 36
 - 1877-78 Rectory: 34
 - 1918 Rectory: 36
 - 1953 Rectory: 36
 - North Edmonton (Franciscans): 91, 92
 - 1911 Chapel and Monastery: 91
- Ross, Mrs.: 48n, 57n
- Ross, Miss: 57n
- Ross, Walter, 48n, 57n
- Ross, William: 57n
- Rowe, Rev. A. H.: 120, 120n
- Rundle, Rev. R. T.: 75
- Rupert, Prince: 3
- Rupert's Land: 3
- Ryswick, Treaty of: 3
- Saddle Lake: 63
- St. Alban the Martyr, Parish of: 63
- St. Albert: 34, 44, 51n, 102, 107
- St. Boniface: 33
- St. George d'Iberville: 33
- St. George's Parish and Church: 62, 63, 64, 131
- St. Germain-en-Laye, Treaty of: 3
- St. Jean, Xavier: 72
- St. Lawrence River—see Rivers.
- St. Mary River—see Rivers.
- St. Norbert: 17, 17n
- St. Paul, Minn.: 21
- St. Paul's Church, Agricola: 56, 57
- St. Pierre, Jacques Legardeur de: 7
- Sarnia: 130
- "Saskatchewan City": 50, 51, 72
- Saskatchewan Hotel—see Hotels.
- Saskatchewan (Province): 6, 25, 51n, 55
- Saskatchewan River—see Rivers.
- Saskatoon: 6n
- Schmidt, Andreas: 67n
- Schmidt, Mathias: 67n
- Schole, Rev. F. A.: 132
- Schools, School Districts, and School Houses
 - Agricola: 57
 - Beaver Creek: 76, 77
 - Beaver Hills: 56
 - Bellevue, Sask.: 51n
 - Edmonton: 52n
 - Fort Saskatchewan: 52, 93, 93n, 98, 128, 131
 - Josephburg: 66, 67
 - Lamoureux—see Saskatchewan.
 - Partridge Hill: 82
 - St. Albert: 51n
 - Saskatchewan (Lamoureux): 51
 - Scotford (Hutterite Colony): 79
 - Stony Plain: 55
- Schuller, W. H. W.: 130
- Schultz: 37n
- Scotford: 79
- Scotland: 52, 57, 57n, 84, 113
- Scott, Leeson and: 51
- Sewer—see Water.
- Shaw, Angus: 11
- Shera & Co.: 92n
- Sherritt Gordon Mines Ltd.: 129, 131

- Simmons, Ellsworth: 92n
 Simon, Father: 91
 Simons, Rev. Robert: 134n
 Simons, Rev. William: 88
 Sinclair, Benjamin: 75
 Sinclair, Rev. J. A.: 118
 Sioux—*see* Indians.
 Sisters of Holy Cross: 36
 Smith, Donald A. (Lord Strathcona): 17
 Smith, W. Osborne: 21
 Sorrel, Agnes (Mrs. A. Forbes): 57
 South Dakota: 18
 South Saskatchewan—*see* Rivers.
 Souris River—*see* Rivers.
 Sparling, George: 81
 Sport: 95, 98
 —Cricket: 98
 —Curling: 95
 —Sports Day (May 24th): 98, 100
 —Swimming: 103, 131
 —Tennis: 95
 Sports Day (May 24th)—*see* Sports.
 Staples, R. E.: 92n
 Steele, G.: 92n
 Steele, James B.: 52
 Steele, S. B. ("Sam"): 21, 26, 37n, 52
 Steinhauer, Rev. H. B.: 75
 Stetson, A.: 123
 Stony Plain: 55, 65
 Strathcona: 102
 "Strathcona, City of", The: 100
 Strathcona, Lord (Donald A. Smith): 17
 Street Railway: 96, 96n, 100, 107
 Sturgeon Creek Post: 32
 Sturgeon River—*see* Rivers.
 Sturgeon River (Namao): 48, 57
 Superior, Lake: 21
 Sutherland, A. M.: 92n, 102, 103n, 123
 Sutherland, George: 12n
 Sweetapple, Inspector: 107
 Sweetapple, Mrs.: 54
 Swimming—*see* Sports.
 Taber, Samuel: 48n
 Tate, Rev. E. J.: 115, 120
 Taylor, G. B.: 103n
 Tennis—*see* Sports.
 The Pas: 7
 Thom: 37n
 Thomas, Frank J.: 66n
 Thomas, Franz, Sr.: 66n
 Thomas, Henry: 66n
 Thomas, Jacob: 66n, 67
 Thomas, Philip, Sr.: 67n
 Thomas, Philip: 66n
 Thompson, Rev. R. McElroy: 134n
 Tims, Tom: 70
 Tomison, W.: 11, 12
 Toronto: 21, 54, 122
 Toronto, University of: 47
 Tough, John: 81
 "Tramways, Limited": 96n
 Tribilcock: 105
 Truslove, William: 84
 Turner, Dr. G. H.: 121, 123
 Turner, Joseph: 118
 Turner, Mrs. J.: 118
 Unterschultz, Clark and: 92n
 Union Bank: 92n
 United Church of Canada: 60n, 122
 —Church Union: 78, 120-123
 —Beaver Hills: 78, 79, 123n, 127
 —Bolton: 123n
 —Deep Creek: 123n
 —Fort Saskatchewan: 78, 79, 81, 89n, 122, 123, 125, 126, 127, 132, 133, 134, 134n, 135-137
 —Old Methodist Church: 81, 89n, 122, 123, 132, 133

- Old Presbyterian Church: 122, 123
- 1949 Church: 81, 133, 134, 134n, 135, 136
- Fort Saskatchewan (Rural): 78, 123, 123n, 125, 126, 127
- Good Hope: 123n, 127
- Namao: 127
- Partridge Hill: 123n, 126, 127, 134, 135
- Patricia: 123, 123n, 127
- Ypres Valley: 123n, 127

- Edmonton Presbytery: 126, 134

- Board of Evangelism and Social Service: 60n
- United States: 16, 16n, 22, 129
- Unterschutz, Peter: 67n
- Utrecht, Treaty of: 3

- Veitch: 92n
- Vermilion Creek: 28
- Vermilion, Fort—see Forts.
- Vetter, Rev. G. F.: 66, 66n
- Victoria Mission and Post: 27, 28, 28n, 62, 75

- Walker, Miss (Mrs. C. S. Laidman): 77n
- Walker, William: 56
- Walsh, J. M.: 23
- Walton, H.: 123
- Walton, Roy: 84, 112
- Ward, Adeline: 36

- Water
 - and Sewer System: 128
 - Towers: 131, 131n
- Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society: 75
- White Earth Creek: 13
- White, Fred: 92n
- White, W. H. ("Nobby"): 74n, 82
- Whitefish Lake: 75
- Whiteside, Rev. Arthur: 66n, 76, 77
- Whitson, John: 82n, 92n
- Whoop-Up, Fort—see Forts.
- Wilkin & Co.: 92n
- Williams, Percy: 82
- Williamson Block: 105n
- Wilmeroth, E. A.: 123
- Wilson, C. B.: 118
- Wilson, Mrs. John: 77n
- Winder, W.: 23
- Wingfield, Rev. H. M.: 126, 127
- Winnipeg: 7, 21, 33, 47, 51, 55, 93n
- Winnipeg, Lake: 1, 7, 16n
- Wisconsin: 68
- Wood, Inspector: 107
- Woods, The Lake of the: 16n
- Woodland Dairy, Ltd.: 107
- Wright: 37n
- Wright, Rev. M. L.: 123

- York Factory: 4, 5n, 6, 8, 9, 10
- Yorkville: 57, 117, 117n, 118
- Ypres Valley: 123n, 127

